

# Strange

## STORIES

JUNE

15¢

13

COMPLETE  
STORIES  
IN THIS  
ISSUE!

### THE PANTING BEAST

A Novelet of  
Hellhound Terror  
By JOHN CLEMONS

FEATURING

### THE HUNCHBACK OF HANOVER

A Modern Miracle Novelet  
By DON ALVISO

A THRILLING  
PUBLICATION



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STRANGE STORIES

JUNE 1940



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# Strange STORIES

VOL. III, NO. 3

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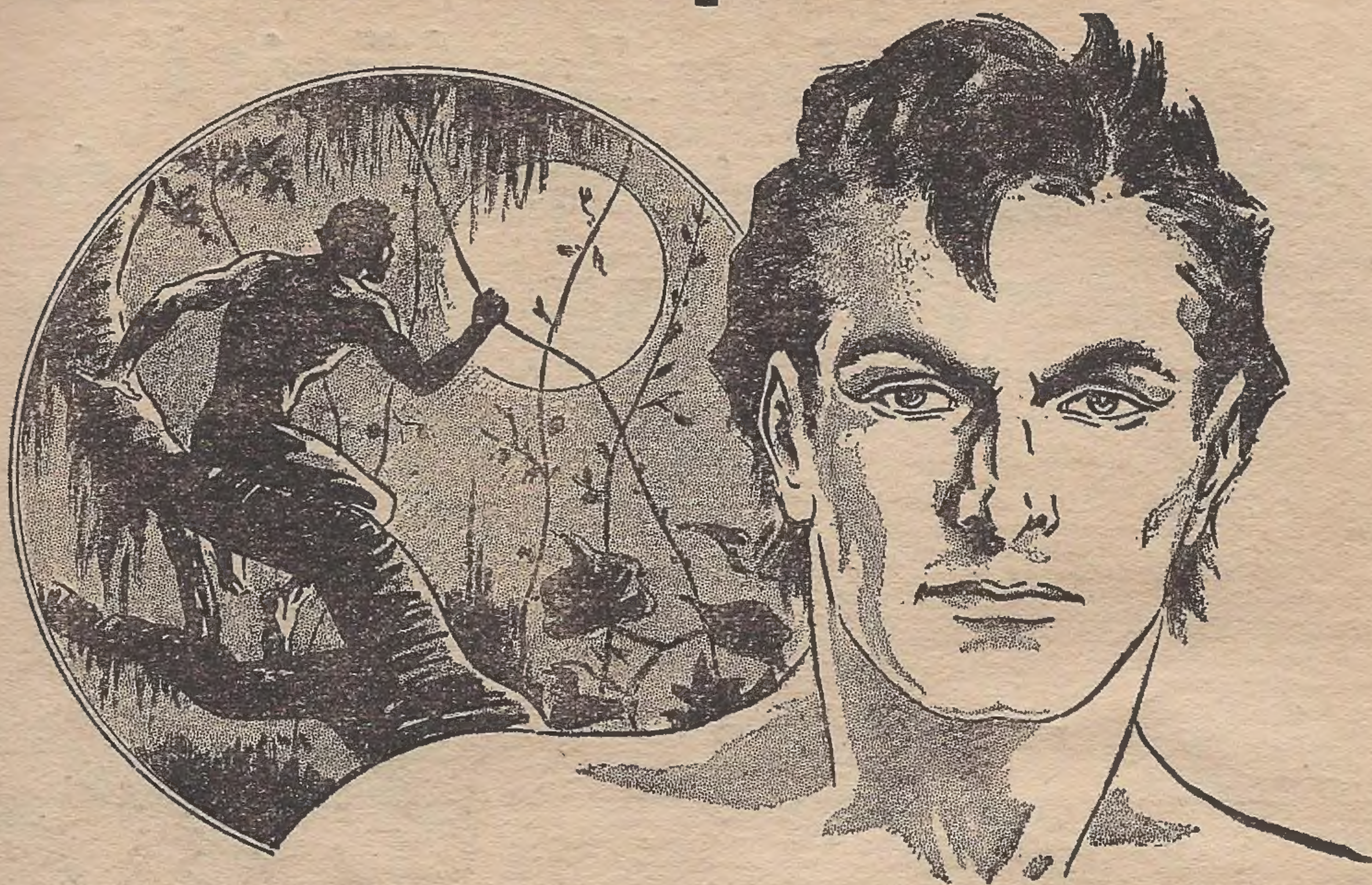
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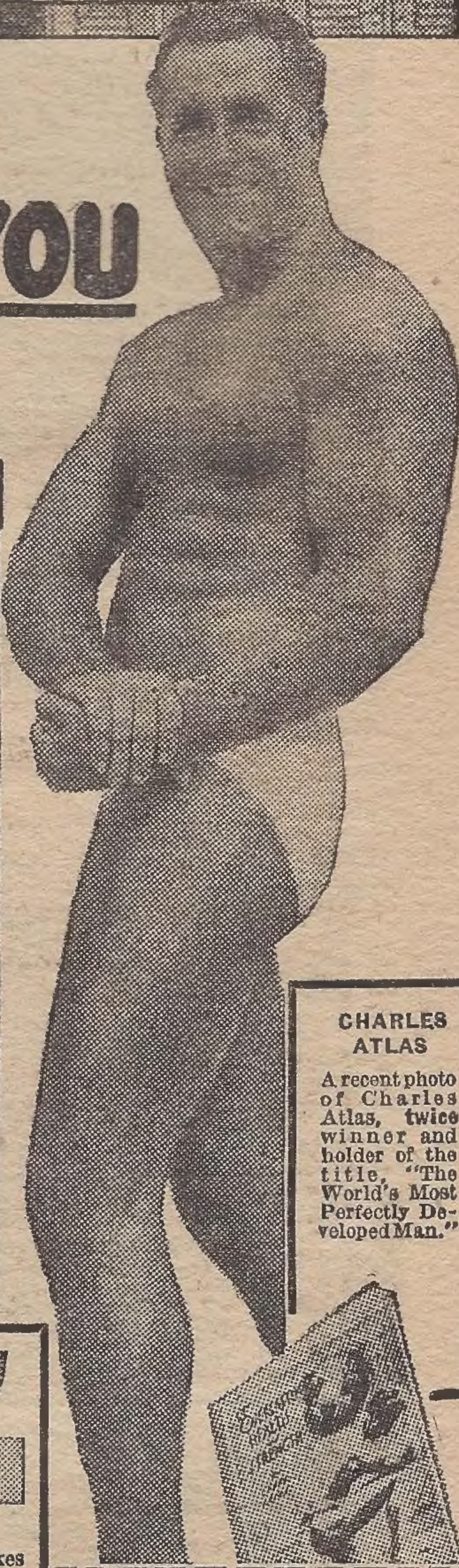


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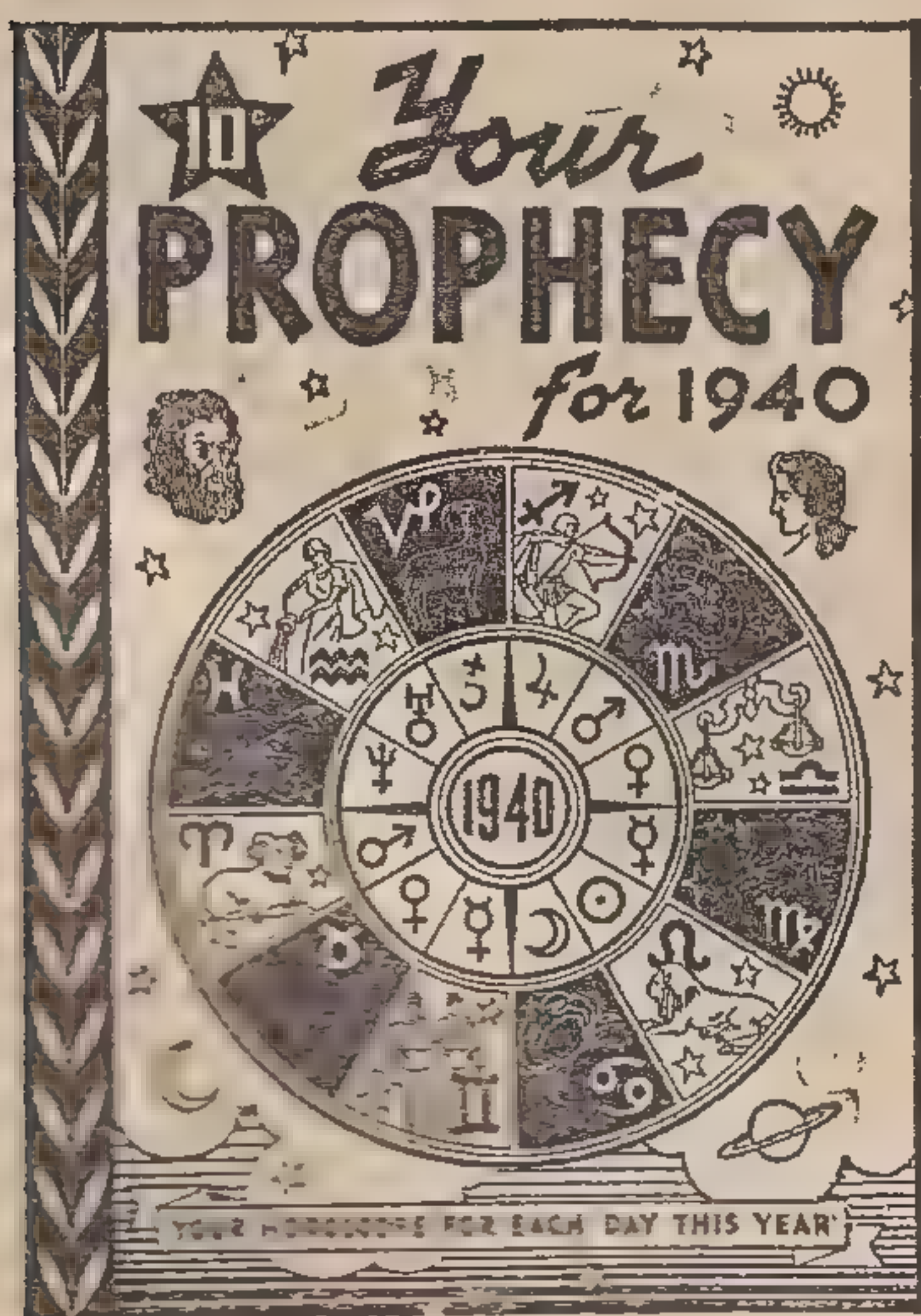


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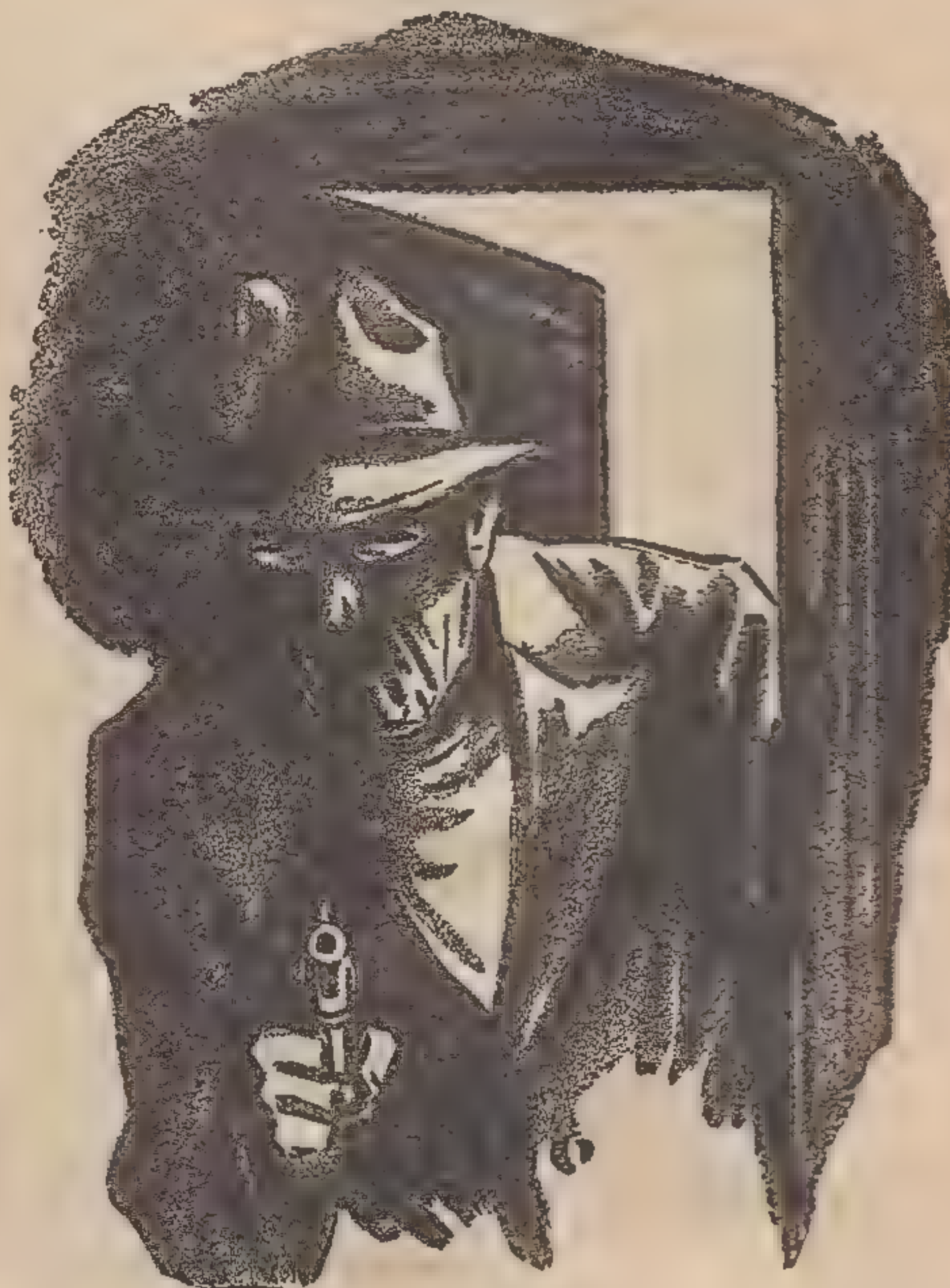
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# The Hunchback



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*Author of "Death is Forbidden," "Mask of the Marionettes," etc.*

*From a Land of Terror Across the Sea, Blinken Calls on the Five Wooden Soldiers Into which He Has Breathed Gypsy Magic!*

## CHAPTER I

### *Blinken Is Real*

**L**OOK out of the window into the night, my friend, and tell me—what do you see? You asked me why I am content just to sit here this night before Christmas and look out of the window. I want

you to look and see what is there in the clear cold darkness. What do you say? You see San Francisco, all dressed up for Christmas Eve? Christmas trees in the windows and Christmas trees in the streets. San Francisco, lying like a great winking jewel between our hilltop and the dark waters of the bay.



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I was left behind for dead

Yes, of course, I knew you would see that. San Francisco is always beautifully decorated and festive on Christmas Eve. But I mean, is there not some one thing that stands clear by itself in all that myriad lights? Ah, you see it! One great white star, blazing high in the air, calling to all the world that it is the night on which

the Christ child was born, and that he is still being born in a million hearts and in a million humble places all over the world.

Do you know where that star is, my friend? It is on the roof of the building which houses Erich Tein's toy shop. You do not know Erich Tein? That is your loss, my friend. He is



one of the bravest and kindest men I have ever known. He is like his father, old Julius Tein, and I am sure no Christmas Eve shall pass as long as I live but that I think of Erich, of his father, and of that other one, the hunchback of Hanover.

I first met Julius Tein in the summer of 1919, when I visited Germany as toy buyer for one of our large San Francisco department stores. Of course, I would call on Tein, since he was then the proprietor of one of the foremost toy factories in the city of Hanover. In those days, when Germany's toy factories filled Christmas stockings all over the world, the products of Tein's workshops were marketed in America under the brand of *Tein-y-Toys*.

I think the most noticeable thing perhaps about old Julius Tein's toys, aside from their most excellent workmanship, was the trademark stamped upon each article: a dwarfed gnome-like figure known to millions of children as Blinken. Until I made that buying trip to Hanover, and was invited by kindly middle-aged Julius to spend a week-end at the ancestral Tein home on the outskirts of Hanover, I had naturally believed Blinken to be the clever creation of some artist's pen.

I had been talking shop with Tein, and had strolled across the room to look out the window. I saw a group of ragged children playing on the banks of the Hesse River which skirted Tein's estate. For an instant I thought nothing more than that here was a group of children, and marveled at their complete happiness and their abandon to the frolic of the moment, until suddenly the group spread a little, and I saw that the children had been gathered around an odd figure quite as ragged as they. An oddly impressive being, not much taller than the children, who was one of them in their play and yet was strangely of another world.

The figure was familiar. How many times I had seen it before! Broad of shoulder, with long powerful arms, with a rather large head set upon rounded humped shoulders. There could be no mistake. Every line of

the shape, every feature of the shrewd bright face was there. Astonished, I whirled upon Julius Tein.

"**B**LINKEN!" I said. "He's real! I never dreamed it. I can't be mistaken? That merry face, that gnomelike figure with the hump between his shoulders. Isn't the hunchback Blinken?"

Tein had come to stand beside me at the window and his clear brown eyes sought the river bank where Blinken tumbled on the grass with the children. He nodded and glanced at me.

"Yes, it is Blinken. He is deformed, but he is not an ordinary hunchback. He is not one of those whose body has been twisted and misshapen by cruel mischance in this mad, rushing world. He was born as he is."

I suppose I looked my surprise.

"Born as he is?" I said. "I'm afraid I am ignorant, Mr. Tein. I thought all hunchbacks were born that way."

Tein shook his head, and his gaze went back through the window to Blinken playing on the river bank with the little children who were nearly as tall as he.

"No, indeed. Few are really born that way. The condition usually grows from an injury to the spine, often in early childhood. Blinken is a strong soul. His soul is as unusual as his body, though it is not warped."

Down by the river I saw Tein's two sons running to join Blinken and the other youngsters. Erich was around twelve, a serious-faced brown-eyed lad much like his father. August was a few years older, a brilliant little chap who promised much, trim and straight in his uniform of cadet at the old University of Heidelberg. I could see the proud light in Julius Tein's quiet eyes as he saw his two sons mingle with the poor children who had come to play on the river bank with Blinken.

"Four years ago, in nineteen-fifteen, my factory had been taken over by the military for the manufacture of munitions," Tein said softly. "I was serving with the infantry in the Black Forest where Italian planes were



bombing the coal mines near Eiderwein. A piece of shrapnel struck me in the head, and I was left behind for dead. The next thing I knew I was being carried into a cave by that little gnome figure, cradled carefully on those long strong arms, and that wise old face of his was looking down at me in anxiety and concern.

"He was wounded, too. A sharp fragment of shell had imbedded itself in the flesh of his side. Poor Blinken! He was smeared with blood, frightened and half starved, but he managed to take care of himself and me as well. He snared small game in the forest and cooked it over a campfire. He stayed by me while I was unconscious. During my days and nights of delirium he was always there hovering over me. When we were strong enough, we left the Black Forest, and of course I brought Blinken home with me. He has lived with us ever since."

Fascinated, my eyes went again to Blinken, at the moment laughing merrily and parading about with young Erich Tein held high on his humped shoulders.

"But who is he?" I asked. "Where did he come from?"

Tein smiled faintly. "I wondered that, too, when I brought him back here to Hanover. He was shy and reticent concerning himself. Yet, since then, piece by piece, I have gathered the main essentials of his history. As I said, Blinken is a strange soul. He was born one stormy midnight in the fastness of the Black Forest which, if you do not know, lies in the extreme southwestern part of Germany. His parents were Atzigans, descendants of that small tribe of ancients who came up from the Himalayas and became the forebears of the Gypsies.

"In case you do not remember, it is believed that the Gypsy clans which have since spread all over the world, had their origin from that original tribe which settled in the Black Forest. Blinken's father was a *bulabasha*, a kind of Gypsy magician, and knew all the old Delva lore which his people had brought up from India and Tibet.

"Blinken was only about fifteen

when the soldiers came into the Black Forest and conscripted all the men for the army fighting on the Western Front. The women and children were left alone, and it was scarcely a month later that the Italian bombing planes came over, bombarding the Eiderwein coal mines. Two bombs fell on the Gypsy camp. Everyone except Blinken was killed. Wounded, he crawled away from the scene of destruction. Perhaps it was Destiny which placed both Blinken and me in the Black Forest that day."

"Then he is only nineteen years old now?" I said, amazed.

**J**ULIUS TEIN'S clear brown eyes rested for an instant on Blinken's cavorting figure, then turned to me, and there was a strangely reverent expression in them.

"Blinken is ten years—a hundred—a thousand years old. The Gypsies are such a strange and secretive race. Only now and then does the outside world get some hint of the mysterious depths of Gypsy lore. Blinken's father taught him strange rites and secret practices. Some of the things Blinken does—I don't know. White magic? Miracles? Necromancy? I say again, I don't know.

"He has fallen into life here with us as naturally as if he had always belonged here. Perhaps, in reality, he is one of us. He goes about for me advertising *Tein-y-Toys*. The children love him, and he loves them. He is an expert wood carver and has originated many new models for me. Whatever uncanny power he has, he keeps it hidden deep within him, but one has only to peer into those twinkling black eyes of his to know that there is something in Blinken's soul far beyond human understanding.

"My business was all but ruined by the war, but with Blinken's help I am building it up again. My factory has been running full speed all spring and summer, to fill this order which your firm has been kind enough to give us. I think the children all over the world will be made happy with *Tein-y-Toys*. They will love Blinken, even as the children here love him. It was not an ill-advised move when



I took his small dwarfed figure for my trademark. You must see him closer; you must talk with him."

Tein stepped nearer to the window, and Blinken, out there on the river bank, as if with some psychic faculty sensing that he was the center of thought between Tein and me, turned suddenly and stared at the house. Tein raised a hand and beckoned to him. He waved a salute in answer to Tein's gesture, and immediately came scurrying across the lawn toward us.

The children all trooped at his heels. Within a few feet of the house Blinken stopped, and turned to face the youngsters, speaking a few quick words which I could not catch. The children nodded and made various signs of assent, and stood grouped together expectantly as if Blinken had promised them something and they were waiting for it.

Blinken wheeled and darted into the house, and within a few seconds he was back again with the children, his hands filled with cookies and cakes which he divided among the hungry-eyed youngsters. Then he spoke to them again, and they went on their way, laughing and calling back to him. For an instant Blinken stood there looking after them, then he turned yet again and reentered the house.

I waited with a great deal of eagerness for his appearance, but he did not immediately come in to join us. Julius Tein looked at me with shrewd understanding eyes.

"He is changing his clothes," he explained. "He would not come in to meet you wearing the ragged outfit he dons when he goes out to play with the ragged children. That is only one of the many strange little things Blinken does. Ah, here he comes."

## CHAPTER II

### *Five Wooden Soldiers*

I HEARD light swift footsteps approaching the door, and then Blinken was in the room. Tein introduced him, and when I took his hand I felt

the strength of his long supple fingers.

Blinken! The Blinken of the toys come to life.

His thick black hair curled in a piled mass over his high forehead and his thin red lips had a pleasant upward curve. His jet black eyes sparkled as he smiled and replied to my greeting, and when I looked deep into those eyes I understood a little better what Julius had tried to tell me about Blinken. His eyes twinkled with the joy of youth, and yet, meeting his gaze, you had the certain feeling that the wisdom of the ages lay there behind his high, clear brow.

Though he was less than four feet tall, I was neither conscious of his diminutive stature nor of his deformity; something in him, the spirit no doubt, was giant and straight and strong. He had clad himself in a silken shirt of bright scarlet and loose black trousers, and had wrapped about his lean waist a Gypsy sash, the exact garb of the gnomelike figure stamped upon *Tein-y-Toys*.

I wanted to talk with him, to draw him out, to know him. He seemed to sense this, and with a kind of indulgent friendliness he answered my questions in a pleasantly unaffected tone.

"Mr. Tein tells me that you do beautiful wood carving," I remarked.

He lifted his long-fingered hands gracefully and smiled. "Beautiful? Perhaps not in the ordinary sense, but I hope it is good." He gestured toward the huge fireplace at the farther end of the long room. "There are some of my little friends on the mantel. When my people lived in the Black Forest, all the men and some of the women were wood carvers. The Atzigans take great pride in carving truly."

I had already noticed the little figures on the mantel, and had been wishing for an opportunity to examine them closely. Now that the opportunity was given me, I lost no time in taking advantage of it. I stepped to the fireplace and centered my attention on the mantel.

A large mirror was set into the stonework just over the mantel. Before the mirror, placed precisely in a



neat row, were five wooden soldiers about ten inches high. Their painted uniforms were exact likenesses of the Heidelberg cadets' garb worn by August Tein, Julius' elder son. Their figures were finely proportioned, but it was their faces that held my gaze—those tiny wooden faces carved so faithfully by sharp tools held in Blinken's deft fingers. Those faces did not look wooden. They looked human. They did not look stiff. They looked like tiny living faces arrested and motionless, as if they were listening, waiting for something.

I could have sworn that those expertly executed little figures were flesh and blood; that their alert bright eyes were staring straight into mine, awaiting only some given word to break the tableau. The effect was uncanny. What elusive something had the carver caught and held with the deft strokes of his carving tools?

I drew a deep breath and turned slowly to face Blinken, who had followed me to the fireplace.

"How did you do it?" I said. "I swear, they seem alive. I don't understand how you can achieve such expression, how you can bring such realism out of a block of wood."

Blinken's jet black eyes held intent on my face, and there was a queer look in them.

"Perhaps ordinary toys are only blocks of wood or pieces of tin," he said. "But these are not ordinary toys, Mr. Darrell. These are"—his voice muted oddly—"these are my comrades. These are five little wooden soldiers which I made especially for August and Erich when I first came here to Hanover to live with the Tein family. I carved them not alone of wood, but out of gratitude for the kindness these people have given me. And in so doing I put something into the bodies of those little figures—something which we Gypsies understand, but which would be very difficult for me to explain to you. I might say that, in a way I—I gave them souls."

**A** CHILL crawled over me. Standing there looking deep down into Blinken's guileless eyes, I could see veiled hints of ancient mysteries

unfolding. I remembered Julius Tein saying that Blinken was a thousand years old—or ten—that some of the things he did were White Magic, miracles, necromancy. And I knew in that instant that Tein had not spoken rashly or lightly.

For those few fleeting moments as I stood there beside him, I think that I faintly understood Blinken, but I make no attempt to explain him. I do not think he can be explained. I do not think there is any explanation intelligent to the human finite mind for those unearthly beings like Blinken who walk among us and share their mystery and their mastery with us for a little while.

A million mysteries haunt our humdrum lives, and we shrug them away with hypocritical platitudes, flee from them with hackneyed evasions, forgetting that sometimes when we are so wise, we really know so little. I knew that I was in the presence of some such thing as I stood there and gazed into Blinken's shining black eyes.

"These things of which I speak have been so befouled by charlatans that it may be difficult for you to separate the true from the false," he said softly. "I could say that we Gypsy woodcarvers put something of ourselves into our work, but it is really more than that. In Gypsy lore we have unseen people who are something like your own fairies and elves; similar, yet in a way quite different, because, you see, our little people are real." Blinken gestured toward the five little wooden soldiers. "In their bodies I have made a home for five of our Atzigan spirit creatures, and I have given them names from our old folklore. They are Tzain, Tzoll, Tzaren, Tzod and Tzest. They know me. See! They are looking at me."

My gaze was drawn to the wooden soldiers, fascinated, and I could have sworn upon oath that their eyes *had* moved so that they were looking directly at Blinken.

"You see, they are waiting," I heard his voice adding. "They will always be waiting my call. I made them for August and Erich. They are not ordinary toys."

I had a strong sense of unreality. I



had the feeling that there was something here beyond the knowledge of all men. Then I became conscious of Julius Tein. He had come up behind Blinken, and paused there, and he looked directly at me over Blinken's head, but he spoke to Blinken.

"Mr. Darrell is our friend, Blinken," he said. "Would you mind letting him see, as you have sometimes permitted me to see when we stand here before the fireplace?"

Blinken made no answer. He stood for a long moment looking intently into my face, then he smiled, and I had more strongly than ever that sense of the uncanny and the unknown. Then Blinken spoke.

"Yes," he said. "Mr. Darrell is our friend—our good friend. I can feel it—here."

His long-fingered hand touched his breast over his heart and then moved toward me. He laid the hand lightly on my shoulder, let it rest there a moment, as if through the tips of his sensitive fingers he might sense my thoughts. And I tell you truly that I felt a current running through those supple digits, into my flesh, into my veins, through my brain and back again to him. Then he dropped his hand.

"Will you look into the mirror, Mr. Darrell?" he said quietly.

I turned my gaze to that wide mantel mirror behind the five wooden soldiers. For a short space of time it seemed only that—a mirror. Then, it was not a mirror. It was space. Simply space, stretching away into the infinite, and I had a puzzling sense of something being lacking there.

Then I knew instantly what it was. While it had remained a mirror, the figures of the wooden soldiers were reflected there. Now it had become space and no reflections remained. Though we stood directly before the silvered glass, neither the image of Blinken's face nor mine appeared there. Illimitable space. Then something moved in that space, a faint mistiness began to gather, as a fog forming and drifting, and something beyond my own volition reminded me of fog over San Francisco Bay.

I suppose that we are all skeptics at

heart. For a fleeting instant I suspected some trick, a mechanical illusion of some sort. Toy makers are wizards of ingenuity, and I knew how many things could be done with mirrors. But I knew in the next instant that no trick was here. I saw the fog thicken, shifting, drifting, until it was as opaque as a heavy cloud bank.

Then, as if some magic hand parted a gauze curtain, the fog parted in the center of the mirror. In the cleared space I could see the uneven skyline of a great city beginning to appear, faintly. It was indistinct at first, but not for long. It intensified and took on solid lines, and I saw it living before me—San Francisco.

I saw the Ferry Building in the foreground, as if I were looking at the city from the bay. One of the East Bay boats was just pulling away from the ferry slip. Beyond the Ferry Building the steel and concrete structures of Knob Hill emerged from the thinning mist.

Like a swiftly enlarging scene on a motion picture screen, the view in the mirror moved forward and became still clearer, as whole sections slid outward past the edge of the mirror, and the Golden Gate Department Store was picked out of the maze of buildings and brought into direct focus as if by a television eye. I heard Blinken's voice at my elbow, sounding unreal and far away.

**THAT** is where your thoughts led us, Mr. Darrell."

I tried to turn toward him, but volition had gone from me. I was frozen there, by amazement and awe. Then like a motion picture fadeout, the scene passed from the mirror. Again it was a mirror only, and there was reflected in it Blinken's face, my own astonished features and the five erect figures of Tzain, Tzoll, Tzaren, Tzod and Tzest. Standing there at attention, and I could well believe now that they were waiting Blinken's call.

I managed finally to turn and confront him. "What is it? Hypnosis?"

He shook his head. "No. You really saw what you thought you saw. For centuries my people have done these things. There are some who would



explain them away with a misnomer—second sight. But I cannot explain them. I do not try.”

Julius Tein stepped closer and laid a hand on Blinken's shoulder.

“No one asks explanation of you, my son. When all that you do is good, why seek method or source? Thank you, Blinken, and excuse us please, if you will. Mr. Darrell and I have much business still to talk over. And you will see him again. He is staying the week-end with us.”

You can well believe that was one week-end in my life which I can never forget. Not that Blinken made any display of what he was. He would not have evoked that vision in the mirror had not Julius Tein requested it of him. There was nothing of the showman or mountebank in Blinken. He was as simple and humble as he was good and wise. But he was there, you see; and those things he had learned from his father, that ancient wisdom, were around him like an aura. He was simply one of those creatures who are not of this earth.

### CHAPTER III

#### *When Despair Came*

**W**HEN I returned to San Francisco, I remembered shrewd and kindly Julis Tein, his hospitable wife, soldierly August and serious-faced young Erich. I remembered them with pleasure. I carried with me the history of the Tein family, given me by Julius himself, of how the Teins had been toy makers for many generations, of how Julius had begun his career as a wood carver, making toys by hand at first, gradually building up his business until his Hanover factory was one of the greatest in all Germany.

I remembered warmly the whole prosperous, happy and contented Tein family. But there is a difference, a vast difference, between the things we merely remember, and the things we cannot forget.

For as I went about my business in America I carried with me always an

inescapable vision of a dwarfed, gnomelike figure dressed in scarlet shirt and Gypsy scarf. A pair of twinkling black eyes, clear and bright as a child's, yet deep with the wisdom of the ages. Blinken and his five little comrades were always with me. That was what I could never forget.

For several years I made my annual trips back to Hanover, and I saw the bitter change that was wrought in the fortunes of the Tein family. Nazi-ism was born and came into power, and that mad dictator rose from obscurity to despotism, to harry and persecute Julius Tein and all his people.

I knew only vaguely the terror and hardships they endured, for Julius was not one to burden others with his troubles. I could not help knowing that because of adverse conditions the production of *Tein-y-Toys* had fallen off to almost nothing; that so much was demanded by the government in taxes that Julius Tein was reduced almost to penury.

Another year when I visited Hanover I learned that Tein's fine estate on the banks of the Hesse River had been taken from him. I found Julius and his family living in a tenement a little way off the Weiderstrasse in the city of Hanover. Julius was growing old now, but the dogged, battling spirit of his race was in him. With Blinken's help he managed to keep the factory going, and he divided his small means between caring for his own family and extending aid to others even less fortunate than themselves.

It was during this same visit to Hanover that I saw Julius Tein's charitable instincts bring grief and trouble upon him. Blinken at the time was absent, having gone to the Black Forest to obtain a supply of special wood from which to carve toys.

Julius Tein went with his son August late one night to deliver a basket of food to a hungry family who lived a short distance away. Julius knew the risk he was taking. The father of the unfortunate family was in ill-favor with the agencies of the government of new Germany; their miserable hovel was being watched.

After Tein had delivered the basket



of food, he was arrested by a detail of the *Schützstaffel*, the dreaded storm troopers. When the troopers started to drag his father off to prison, August interfered, and one of the stiffly uniformed soldiers fired in haste.

August died with a bullet through his heart and Julius Tein spent six months in the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau. I know that Julius came back from that horror a broken man.

But when, a year later, I was again in Hanover, I was amazed at the courage and fortitude with which the Tein family accepted their lot. No weary complaining, no tirades of bitterness. Erich's mother was slowly dying of grief over the death of August, her elder son, and with her last breath she was patiently planning with Julius to send Erich to America. He could, they said, set up a branch toy shop in San Francisco and sell *Tein-y-Toys* to the American trade. I knew the real reason behind their planning was to save Erich from what they feared lay ahead in the homeland.

And of course when Erich reached San Francisco, he came straight to me. I helped him to find a storeroom and get his new toy shop started. I watched Erich's untiring industry. I saw his toy shop slowly grow into a thriving business and I knew the reason for his eagerness, his driving labor that would never let him rest. I would have known what lay in his thoughts even if he had not explained to me one day.

"**Y**OU see, Mr. Darrell," he said, "my mother is now dead and my father is all alone. When the business is enough here, my father comes to America with me."

I looked into his serious brown eyes, and spoke the involuntary thought that flashed into my mind.

"And Blinken, too?"

A smile lighted his thin face. "Of course, and Blinken."

Erich had his living quarters in the rear of the toy shop; frugal quarters, but pleasant. The larger of the two rooms, his combination living room and bedroom, had a fireplace at one end. Over the mantel Erich had

erected a broad mirror. On the mantel before the mirror stood five little wooden soldiers, the soldiers Blinken had made for August and Erich; but August was gone now.

And those five uncanny little beings seemed as bright and new and unmarred as they had been years ago when Erich was only a boy. When I would go there to see Erich, I could not keep my eyes away from those tiny unbelievable shapes on the mantel. And I seemed always to see in the mirror a vision of Blinken's face. Increasingly I wondered how it was with him and the aging Julius, and why those strange powers of Blinken's had not saved them in some measure from the bitterness of persecution they had suffered.

Then that persecution grew worse, and Erich went about white-faced and worried, like a ghost of himself, and there was no longer even a friendly smile on his calm, gaunt features. I grew more and more concerned about him, and one day when I was there I stepped close to him and laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Erich, we've been friends for a long time," I said urgently. "What's wrong? Has something terrible happened over there?"

His clear brown eyes clouded with pain, and his lips quivered.

"My father. He is again in bad trouble. He has not much, but there are so many others who have less. He was caught giving food to some starving children. He was beaten and sent again to the horrible barbed wire prison at Dachau." Erich's white face flamed with bitter indignation. "I am afraid that he cannot stand another six months in that hell-hole. It is like being sentenced to death for giving food to his own people who are starving."

I gripped his shoulder tight. "Then why doesn't he come, Erich? Why doesn't he come to you, since there is nothing to hold him there?"

Erich glanced cautiously around before he answered, as if some of the fear and terror from his homeland had pierced the intervening space and chilled him there in the back rooms of his San Francisco toy shop.



"My father cannot get out of Germany," he whispered. "He has not the money or the way. The talk of war increases. He has heard too many things and he has seen too much of the horror of new Germany. They will not let him go and I am afraid for him. I am afraid I will never see him again. I am sick with worry, and I am afraid."

There wasn't much I could say. I was afraid, too. And I looked up at the little wooden soldiers on the mantel, and soundlessly, in my heart I cried:

"Blinken! Why don't you do something? With all your ancient magic, are you powerless now? Is there nothing in your wisdom that can answer your need?"

But there was no reply. They were only five tiny wooden figures on the mantel, and the mirror was only a piece of silvered glass, reflecting Erich's bowed head and my own disturbed pale face.

That was the year that Erich said: "I will not put up the star this Christmas. It was my signal of gratitude to the world and to man for the better things that have been granted us. What have I to be grateful for now? There will be no star shining from the roof of the *Tein-y-Toy* shop this year."

**I** COULD not remonstrate with him. I could not remind him of all he still had to be grateful for when I knew the depth of his affection for his father, the bitterness of his grief over the murder of his brother August and the death of his mother. I couldn't help thinking of the desperate hope there had been in old Julius Tein's heart when he had sent Erich to America, of the hope there had been in Erich's heart when he came.

And now it seemed that all that hope had been in vain. Out of all that planning and dreaming for a salvaged future there seemed only wreckage and tragedy to come. And for Erich to say that there would be no star shining from his roof on Christmas Eve was enough to tell me how completely in despair he was.

The star was a great thing of alumi-

num and steel. Erich had had it constructed several years before, on hinged supports, so that during Christmas week it could be raised to blaze through the night from his toy shop. It stood thirty feet high, and was a solid mass of white frosted globes. After Christmas its hinged supports were released so that it lay flat upon the roof top. The globes were removed and the huge star was covered with a sheet-metal lid, to sleep until the next Christmas.

For several Christmases now, blazing Erich's gratitude and Erich's dream, it had gleamed from the top of the toy store through the crisp cold nights; that simple symbol to call to little children from the toy shop that was fairyland to them — one great white gleaming star. The star was not to shine this year. Christmas came and went, but only blackness hovered over the roof of the *Tein-y-Toy* shop.

I think there wasn't a child in San Francisco who did not miss the star. I know I heard comments concerning it for months afterward as the harried world rolled on into the year of 1939, and the intolerance and persecution in Erich's homeland grew more hatefully unbearable, and the dark shadows of war loomed ever more menacing upon the horizon.

Then came Germany's invasion of Poland. The war broke, and Erich lost all hope of ever seeing his father again. If Erich had been a worried man before, he was a broken man now. It saddened me to see him. His shoulders were bent; there were gray streaks beginning to appear at his temples. There was no least vestige of hope left in his clear brown eyes. It had been months since he had heard from either his father or Blinken.

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## CHAPTER IV

### *"This Is the End"*

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**T**WO days before Christmas—that is, only two days ago, you understand—I went into Erich's shop to see him. It was late afternoon and the



sidewalks on Mission Street were crowded with late shoppers hurrying to buy almost forgotten gifts. The shops were crowded, and the spangled and tinseled display windows were nearly hidden by the people crowded around looking into them.

Wreaths and colored lights festooned the lamp posts, and the faces in the stream of humanity were eager and bright. The Christmas spirit pervaded the chill night air, and seemed to be battling with the dank fog which drifted in from the shrouded bay and cast haloes around the street lamps.

Erich was busy with several customers when I went in. The whole shop was brightly lighted to combat the dismal fog, and the door into Erich's back rooms stood wide open. I could look through and see the mantel and the mirror. I could see the straight young bodies of the little wooden soldiers in their painted garb of a day long gone by, the cadet uniform of the old University of Heidelberg. I could see their perfect little faces with that queer attitude of listening, their still eyes staring at me, waiting; and they made me think of Blinken.

As I stopped by the counter, Erich took a wrapped package from beside the cash register and glanced beyond me with a sudden smile. I turned to follow the direction of his glance. Little Johnny Kelly, the crippled newsboy who had the stand on the corner, had just sold his last paper. He came limping his way homeward and paused a moment to call to Erich.

"Merry Christmas, Mr. Tein!" he said gaily, and waved a hand.

Erich extended the tinsel-wrapped package across the counter.

"Merry Christmas to you, Johnny. Take this home with you. It's for you and the mama. And you'd better be scooting along. She'll be waiting for you."

Johnny took the package with eager hands.

"Gee—thanks! Gee—that's sure—swell. You're always givin' the kids things. But say, Mr. Tein, you're goin' to light the star, ain't you? You ain't goin' to leave it dark like it was last

year, are you? Gee, Mr. Tein! That star's the prettiest—well, all the kids, we—"

Erich Tein shook his head slowly, sadly. Something in his face stopped Johnny's tongue. Johnny Kelly had known his portion of misery. He nodded understandingly, murmured a repetition of his thanks and went on his way. After the boy had gone out of the shop hugging his package, Erich spoke to me bitterly. He spoke low, too quietly for any of the customers in the shop to hear.

"I wish I could find it in my heart to light the star—even for one Johnny Kelly. But there is no gratitude in me any more. Only misery, bitterness, and despair."

Then he went on to attend his customers, but his face was set and a blank look in his eyes showed that his mind was not there in the toy shop. I knew where his thoughts were; thousands of miles across the continent and an ocean and two decades of years. He was in Hanover. He was literally living again the days he had spent in the old ancestral home of the Teins, remembering the years when old Julius, now a hunted and beaten man, had been the foremost toy manufacturer of Germany.

And I knew, too, he was remembering the days before the fortunes of his family had been changed, never to be the same again. I could almost hear Erich repeating the words he had spoken to me only a few short months before: "Everything is lost. Now they have even changed the toy factory in Hanover from Santa Claus' workshop into a munitions mill where bomb fuses and hand grenades are made."

**W**HILE I was thinking of these things I saw Erich look once out through the big front window of the toy store. I knew he was not seeing San Francisco's neon-lighted skyline, or the dim lights of the Bay Bridge showing faintly through the fog which hung over the bay. He was remembering the holidays he had spent with his grandparents at Bremerhaven, where the heavy fog from the North Sea rolled inland—just as



the fog was drifting in from the bay tonight. Erich's thoughts were most bitter whenever he remembered the past, and especially that part of the past when his homeland was in chaos and old Julius had sent him to America to establish the *Tein-y-Toy* business in San Francisco.

He was so buried in his hopeless thoughts that he did not notice the stout, well dressed man who paused a moment by the big show window, then came on into the store. But I noticed him, and I suppose it was because something in him aroused my irritation.

I didn't know who he was, but he was definitely of the type that thinks the world is run to suit him, else it is ill-managed. He came into the toy shop with the air of one conveying a vast favor upon the proprietor by his mere presence. He acted as if he owned the place. He stalked around examining all the toys on the shelves and on display, and there was a faintly supercilious expression on his face as if nothing he saw was quite worthy of his exalted attention.

Then he happened to glance into Erich's living room, and his gaze fell upon the five wooden soldiers on the mantel. He stopped short, impressed in spite of himself, and stepped up to the open doorway and inspected the little wooden figures with a long intent look. Abruptly then, he wheeled about, and walked up to the counter where Erich had just delivered a wrapped package to a departing customer.

"I've been looking for wooden soldiers for my small son, and unable to

find anything fit," the stout man said peremptorily. "Those you have there on the mantel will do nicely."

Erich looked at the well dressed man with eyes that did not see him.

"I am sorry. Those are not for sale."

The stout man glared his quick indignation. "Nonsense! I must explain to you that money is no consideration to me, and a man should never possess anything he cannot sell if the price is right. I want those five wooden soldiers and no others."

Erich's voice did not sharpen. "I am sorry, sir. They are not for sale. I have any number of other wooden soldiers, here on this counter."

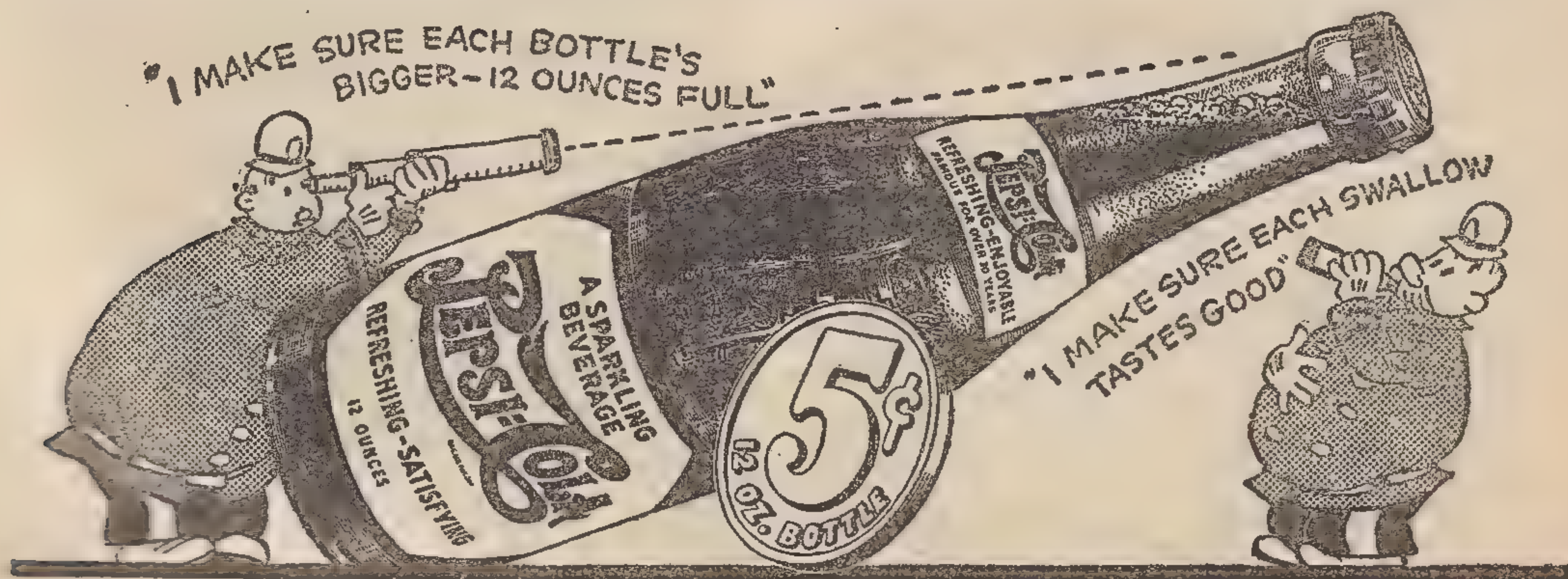
He moved to a table bright with tinsel, on which battalions of brightly colored soldiers were arrayed—dough-boys, blue jackets, Foreign Legionnaires, Bengal Lancers, almost every nation was represented. The stout man gave the table only a cursory glance.

"Ordinary wooden soldiers." His voice was acrid with contempt. "I want those on your mantel. I told you the price does not matter. I am used to paying for things I want. How much?"

He drew a thick wallet from his pocket, pressed it open and fingered the sheaf of bills it enclosed. Erich looked him levelly in the eye.

"You waste your time and mine. Under certain circumstances I might give those wooden soldiers to your little boy, or any other little boy, but I would never sell them. You see, they were made for me and my brother by a very dear friend when I was only a little boy myself. No money could buy them."

[Turn Page]





The stout man's gaze scorched Erich from head to foot.

"My money can buy them!" he said harshly. "If you are wise, you will discard your stubborn attitude. I want those soldiers and I'm going to have them."

Erich merely stood there and looked at him, and I wondered for a moment if the stout man's arrogant insistence could possibly wrest those priceless little beings from Erich's possession. I should have known Erich better than that. He drew up his shoulders, his head went back, and he seemed to grow taller in stature.

"The only way you could ever get them would be to steal them," he said precisely, coldly, "and I think — I think I would kill any man who did that."

The stout man started, his face flushed with fury.

"It is poor business for a tradesman to grow insulting, Mr. Tein. You do not know who I am. I can see that, so I will tell you. I own this building in which you leased space from my agent to house your shop. This is once your independence is no mark of wisdom. If your business is so good that you can refuse a profitable sale, then you can surely afford to pay me a much higher rent for these quarters than you have been paying. I will see that this is attended to when your lease for the new year is drawn up."

He swept Erich with another disdainful glance, whirled on his heel and stalked in high dudgeon from the shop.

For that instant there was no one in the shop but Erich and me. Erich looked at me with tragic eyes. He spread his hands eloquently and his shoulders drooped in a helpless gesture.

"The last straw. So now I go out of business, my friend. I cannot afford increased rent. Business is too poor. This is the end. I am done; and all because I would not part with my dear little comrades, all I have left of my father and Blinken. Well, so be it, then. I will at least give as much happiness as I can with the stock I have left."

He cut himself short as a little old

woman came hurrying into the shop and he turned to her to ask what she wanted. I knew that his clear brown eyes encompassed her tired face, her graying hair and her thin, threadbare coat.

"What is it for you, Madam?" Erich said.

The old lady stopped by a table of dolls. Her eager, sunken eyes traveled over the numerous small figures and came to rest on one exquisite example of the toy maker's art; a beautifully carved, finely enameled wooden doll about a foot tall. The doll had jointed legs and arms and head, with a sweet, lovely face and curling honey-colored hair. The doll was dressed in gauzy spotless white. I happened to know that it was hand-made and expensive. The old lady's eyes clung to it as she answered Erich.

"I—I'm looking for something for a little girl." She hesitated and raised her gaze to Erich. "My granddaughter. She hasn't any mama or papa to buy her things. She's crazy for a doll, one with yellow hair like Goldilocks. I—I haven't very much. What is the best you could show me for about seventy-five cents?" Her eyes shifted back to the beautiful doll, and she added hesitantly: "I—I could pay a dollar."

Not a muscle of Erich's face moved. Not an instant's faltering slowed the movement of his hand as he reached toward the golden-haired doll in the white dress, and again I seemed to hear him saying that he would give as much happiness as he could with the stock he had left. He lifted the doll and held it up for the old woman's closer inspection.

"Would your little granddaughter like this one? This is a very special doll. It was made by Blinken himself."

The old lady looked dubiously puzzled. "Blinken?" she repeated inquiringly.

Erich pointed to the tag hanging from the doll's shoulder, a tag that bore the legend, "*Tein-y-Toys*," and the brightly-colored likeness of Blinken in his scarlet shirt and Gypsy sash.

"This is Blinken. Only, he is real,



you see. He models all of our best toys. He made this one with his own hands." Erich indicated the golden-haired doll.

The old lady drew a long breath. "Oh, it's lovely! But I really told you the truth. I can't pay more than a dollar."

"That is quite all right," Erich said gently. "It is such a short time until Christmas, the shopping is nearly over. I have much stock to sell in a short time. You may have this doll for fifty cents."

**T**HE little old lady was embarrassingly pleased. She was still exclaiming her gratitude and delight after Erich had wrapped the doll and she went out of the door with the package clasped carefully in her arms. I looked at Erich.

"You'll get rid of your stock in record time if you go at it that way. There'll be enough last-minute shoppers in San Francisco between now and closing time tomorrow night to clean out your store."

The smile on his face was thin and infinitely sad.

"It is better to give for joy than to hoard for loss. If I do not have a toy left in the shop tomorrow night besides my five little comrades, what do I care? I think all the wanting left in me is a feverish desire to go where Blinken and my father are, and my brother and my mother. I haven't the least doubt that they are together now."

I stood around his shop for an hour and watched him practically give away hundreds of dollars worth of toys. He moved about like a man in a dream, speaking calmly and quietly to customers, wrapping packages in holly paper and tying them with tinsel, and taking in return whatever the buyers were able or willing to pay.

Then it got too much for me and I left Erich Tein's toy shop and went home. I swore I wasn't going back there till after Christmas day, but we swear a lot of things we know at the time we'll never carry through. I thought I couldn't bear that look on Erich's face, I couldn't bear that beaten, mechanical way in which he

moved about, but I found that I could bear with still less equanimity not knowing what was going on in the toy shop. I managed to stay away until about four hours ago this evening—this Christmas Eve, my friend.

Then my concern proved stronger than I was, and I went over to Erich's toy store. It was no worse than I had pictured it. Erich moving about in the shop like a man in a dream, people coming in and going out—mostly poor people now, like the old lady who had bought the doll—carrying with them toys that were worth three times, ten times what they had paid for them. And over all the feverish festive air of Christmas Eve which left Erich untouched.

He closed the shop early, simply because he was too weary to attend to customers any longer. We went back into the living room and sat down and he offered me something to eat and I didn't want it. I just sat there thinking of the huge star up on the roof, lying flat on its back, masked, dark, like a European city after an air raid alarm. I thought of the plump well dressed man who had come into the shop the night before; of his insufferable arrogance and the final bitter hardship his pique had worked on Erich Tein.

I thought of the five little wooden soldiers on the mantel, and I got slowly to my feet and walked over to the fireplace to stand close and look at them. I heard Erich rise from his chair and follow me, and neither of us spoke, but we stood there, gazing at those five tiny erect figures, and the reflections of their straight little backs in the mirror.

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## CHAPTER V

### *To the Rescue*

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**I** DON'T know which of us noticed it first. I only know that in one instant the reflections of the soldiers in the mirror began to fade, and almost in the same instant Erich gripped my arm with fingers that



cinched tight and hard. I caught my breath, remembering a long-gone day and another mirror, remembering Blinken and his deep wise eyes.

I felt the same chill crawl over me as I had felt that day in Hanover. I felt my gaze glued to the mirror, with all power gone from me to draw it away even if I had wanted to do so.

And then the mirror was gone, and there was only space—space stretching away into the infinite; illimitable space. Then the mistiness began to gather, like a dark fog forming and drifting, and I saw that it was neither mist nor fog, but a drab wall fading away to expose the dim interior of a miserable darkened room where the only light was a small stub of a candle guttering on the floor in the corner.

The one window of the hovel was shrouded with a thick, dark cloth to prevent any light from escaping into the night. It was a dismal cubicle where one might hide from certain death and I strained my eyes for sight of some living person in that place.

Then I saw him, moving toward me out of the shadows into the foreground. Blinken! But what a changed Blinken! His thick black hair was disheveled. His black eyes were wide and wild. His face was thin and pale and streaked with blood. I heard Erich catch his breath and I saw then that old Julius Tein was crouched close at Blinken's side. The old man was weak and ill, and there was blood on the side of his face, running down from his hair where a blow had cut his scalp.

"Blinken! Where are you? What can we do to help?" I cried aloud, involuntarily.

His voice came thin and faint as if across measureless space, but his words were clear.

"You can do nothing. Again we have offended by giving food to the starving. Though we have little enough ourselves, there are others in more bitter need. We gave what we had and the Gestapo caught us."

"The Gestapo!" Erich breathed. "The dreaded secret police—that madman's spies!"

"The storm troopers are coming for us," Blinken's voice was going on.

"Listen. They are even now at the door."

"The *Schützstaffel*," Erich muttered. "Those Nazi fanatics with steel helmets and bayonets on their guns!"

And behind Blinken there came the sound of gun butts pounding on the door. Loud guttural commands from outside the hovel and then Blinken's voice again.

"There is nothing but death if they break down the door and find us here alone."

From across limitless space Blinken's keen black eyes seemed to search for something, and then rest on the row of wooden soldiers standing on the mantel before us.

"How long you have waited for my call, my little comrades," Blinken's voice went on. "And I promised you that call should never come, save in a last dire need to save the life of another. Only for that would I call you to this bitter reality of living, breathing, fighting men. — That time is here! Tzain! Tzoll! Tzod! Tzaren! Tzest! Come!"

Hearing that voice from so far away, I remembered what Blinken had said so long ago—that these were not ordinary toys. Into each of them he had breathed an elf spirit which was something like a soul. They were waiting his call.

My gaze jerked to the five wooden soldiers. Remember, my friend, this may sound strange to you, but I saw it with my own eyes, this very night, a scant four hours ago. I saw these things and heard these words. I saw those five emotionless little figures stand listening for an instant, as if startled and breathless, and then they moved.

THEIR rifles went quickly from order to their shoulders, and they wheeled smartly and faced Blinken. He gripped his hands into fists and held them out before him in a beseeching gesture of prayer. At his shoulder old Julius crouched staring, a mad light of hope in his eyes. At the door behind them the storm troopers thundered and the frail portal sagged under the assault of their rifle butts.

Then the five little soldiers, wooden



no longer, swung briskly forward, and as they marched into that space that had been a mirror I saw them growing, growing, until they attained full stature, their lithely erect forms blotting out the sordid room, blotting out Blinken and the wasted figure of Julius.

How far had they to go? Who knows? Anyhow, what are time and space to those who have access to Blinken's ancient wisdom? One minute those five figures went marching into the infinite. The next minute they marched into that sordid room, and they stood ranked before the door,

go outside and give yourselves up to my men!"

But the five erect scarlet clad figures remained, silent and unmoving, a living barrier between the *Schützstaffel* and their innocent prey. The storm troop captain drew his pistol and his voice rose to a hoarse shout.

"I command you! Surrender your arms!"

No answer, and no sign of compliance. The captain's thick neck bulged above the stiff tight collar of his tunic. He leveled his pistol at Tzain and fired. The steel jacketed bullet whined uninterruptedly as through space, and

*The Magic Ring Was a Heritage of Evil—and  
It Heeded the Baleful Powers of  
Darkness in*

## THE SEAL OF SIN

*A Spine-Chilling Complete Novelet*

**By HENRY KUTTNER**

IN THE NEXT ISSUE



their rifles lowered and leveled as the men of the *Schützstaffel* crashed through the door.

**T**HE storm troop captain and three of his men entered, blinking against the dim light of the feeble candle. Then an electric torch flashed in the captain's hand. Its burning light flashed over the red and gold uniforms of Blinken's five comrades and the captain fell backward a step.

"What is this that we have here?" the captain demanded. "Those uniforms? Do you not know that they are forbidden by our leader? You should be wearing the uniform of new Germany. You should be fighting on the battle lines with the others. In the name of the *Reich* I place you under arrest. Throw down your guns and

something like a little smile of contempt lingered for a moment on Tzain's finely molded lips. Otherwise he did not move.

"You traitorous swine!" the storm troop captain snarled in rage. "You stand there protecting those who have displeased our leader! You will pay for your treachery. You will pay!"

The officer called out a harsh command and the others of the troop rushed crowding into the hovel. The captain gestured toward the five silent figures.

"Kill them!" he commanded. "Empty your guns into their bodies, and if some of your bullets strike those two behind, it does not matter."

So saying the captain raised his pistol again. He fired two shots point-



blank at Tzoll's breast and two more at Tzest.

"Kill them!" he shouted madly. "Kill them!"

But strangely the storm troopers did not move. There were a dozen or more of them, and their eyes were all glued to the oddly compelling stares of Blinken's five comrades. What they saw there only those men of the *Schutzstaffel* knew. They were well trained soldiers, disciplined and taught to obey their officers' commands, but here was a greater power than any they had ever known before; a thing which instilled within them a fear greater than their fear of punishment for disobedience.

Those nearest the door began to step backward, and as if by common consent the detail of storm troopers followed in slow retreat. The frantic captain threw down his empty pistol and jerked a bayoneted rifle from the man nearest him. Pointing the wickedly jagged blade at Tzod's breast, the *Schutzstaffel* captain was poised, ready to lunge. In another instant he would have buried the bayonet deep in Tzod's flesh, but then the five comrades moved.

With a unity of purpose requiring no spoken command, their hands tensed upon their rifles, and the crash of their volley was as one explosion. The storm trooper flung up his arms and staggered backward, falling. Outside the hovel could be heard the hurried footsteps of his men in quick retreat. . . .

**T**HERE in the back room of the San Francisco toy shop, Erich Tein's fingers quivered on my arm. Standing there by Erich's side I saw Tzaren and Tzod lift Julius Tein between them, and Tzoll and Tzest likewise lifted Blinken. They went marching out past the door, Tzain in the lead with his rifle at ready. And then the dark fog clouded the infinite, and slowly cleared away, and the mirror was again only a mirror. And from before it the five little wooden soldiers were gone.

I stood for a long time staring at the empty place on the mantel. A thin film of dust coated the varnished wood

and there were only five clean spots there to show where Blinken's five comrades had stood in an orderly row. I felt myself shaking as I turned to face Erich.

He was a transformed Erich. He stood erect, and there was a great light in his face, and a new hope blazed high in his clear brown eyes.

"Come, we must get the workmen!" he said urgently. "We must get the globes! We must light the star. It will not take us an hour!"

But it took us nearly an hour and a half before we had every globe in place and the star erected on its high supports, blazing its gratitude and its promise against the dark waters of the bay. We left the roof and went down to Erich's rooms back of the toy shop. Erich seemed tense and ill at ease, and as if seeking some palliative for his restlessness, he switched on the radio.

A Christmas play was being broadcast over the network. We had tuned in close to the end of an act, and during the short intermission, the New York announcer broke in with the statement that we would now hear a short war news flash from London. A few seconds later we heard the voice of the London commentator. I thought I detected a note of joy in his brisk matter-of-fact voice coming to us over an ocean and a continent as his quick words followed close one upon another.

"Perhaps the strangest bit of war news in weeks came this Christmas Eve from Aalten, a small village in Holland near the German border. The report tells of five strange soldiers who came marching out of Germany amid a hail of machine gun bullets from the Nazi frontier guards. These five soldiers, scarcely more than boys, were dressed in the uniform formerly worn by the cadets at the old University of Heidelberg, and they brought with them into neutral Holland a venerable old man who has been identified as Julius Tein, former Hanover toy manufacturer, and a Gypsy hunchback known as Blinken.

"These seven refugees from Nazi Germany surrendered themselves to the military of the Netherlands, but



during the momentary excitement of their arrival, the five strange soldiers mysteriously disappeared. After being questioned and having their identity established, the old man and the hunchback were promised refuge in Holland until such time as arrangements could be completed for their passage to America where Julius Tein's son resides.

"And now comes the strangest part of this Christmas story from Holland. Early this morning the small son of a poor Dutch family trundled out of bed and went hopefully to the fireplace where he had hung his stocking the night before. He didn't expect to find more than a few cookies or a piece of candy, but in that stocking were five tiny wooden soldiers, all dressed in the red and gold cadet uniform of old Heidelberg.

"And this, ladies and gentlemen, ends the broadcast from London. I return you now to New York."

Erich stepped quickly to the radio and snapped the switch. I heard him sob, and I heard again faintly the voice of Blinken, calling his five comrades to life across half the world. I gripped Erich's hand and turned and went out of the toy shop. It was no place for me. Erich wanted to be alone with his happiness and his gratitude, with all the new hope of the future that was to come.

And I came straight home, that I might stand here with you at the window and look down upon that great star blazing high in the air. That bright white star calling to all the world that the Child is still being born in a million hearts and in a million humble places; reminding us forever that the day of miracles will never be done while there live men like Blinken whose twinkling black eyes are as fresh as a child's, and whose wisdom is as ancient as time itself.

*Siamese Twins Face Fate's Mockery in SATAN'S SIDESHOW, a Complete Novelet of the Fear of the Unseen by CARSON JUDSON—One of the Thirteen Gripping Tales in the Next Issue!*



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# The Vengeance of Hanuman

By HAMILTON CRAIGIE

*Author of "The Man-Trap," "The Jailer of Souls," etc.*



Bogash, berserk, hurled the organ-grinder through the window

**I**T WAS characteristic of "Brute" Bogash that, having served his time for a brutal assault that had almost done for the woman who had been his wife, he visited the monkey house in the zoo.

He had gotten off the train at the uptown station, near the park, because he had had it in mind to meet a man there, an ex-con, who might be able to put him in the way of some "work."

*A Strange Curse Claims An Ex-convict When He Taunts the God of the Monkeys!*

But at the saloon which was this man's port-of-call he was told to come back in an hour. And after a drink or two



—Bogash was not a drinking man—he had lumbered across to the park, and the zoo there. It was as good a place as any in which to spend an hour, and, in going there, he could kill two birds with one stone.

He had grinned at that, since it was not altogether to while away the time that he had gone into the zoo there, and then stopped in at the monkey house. He had already been there before. It was not that he was amused by the monkeys. It was attributed to the fact that seeing anything behind bars aroused a simmering, feverish feeling in him. Instead of being sorry for anything that was caged, Bogash experienced a sadistic satisfaction in coming to gloat over the prisoners behind their barriers, to laugh at them, to mock them—and more.

Bogash had come there at a time when the monkey house was all but deserted. He glanced covertly and carefully to right and left. Then, with a bestial grimace, he extended his hand. For a man of his immense bulk, although he was not tall, the ex-convict was as quick as a striking adder, and the dart of his hand was like a thrusting adder's tongue.

The monkey nearest him—a bearded Entellus—screamed, almost with a human sound, as the point of the sharpened stick jabbed into him. But the stick was back again, in Bogash's coat-sleeve. If there had been anyone standing at his elbow it is questionable if the lightning thrust of the sharp instrument would have been seen. It was with this single purpose of tormenting the monkey in mind that Bogash selected a sharp stick on the ground before going in to see them.

The monkey, a small one, had dropped to the floor of the cage, doubled over, and throughout the cage now there rose a bedlam of shrieks and screams.

A UNIFORMED attendant came running; but Bogash, his hands in his pockets, was standing there, mouth open. The attendant shrugged.

"They don't like you, maybe, Mister," he said. Then he began to walk away as Bogash, beginning to grin

again, stopped his grin as if it had been wiped off.

"Damn dirty monks—you'd like to get at me, wouldn't you?" he muttered under his breath. But it was not that altogether. To the ex-convict never in any sense an imaginative man, it seemed for a moment as if the apes there were making gestures at him. The screams had drifted to a queer silence. To a zoological expert that would have been most puzzling, but to Bogash it signified nothing. And now he grinned.

But the grin was an uncertain one. He shivered, and in the house of the primates it was extremely warm. Red-rimmed eyes alight with knowledge, they were all looking at him. Particularly the Entellus monkey, the Hanuman. And if he had been an imaginative man he might have thought that those gestures beckoned him. It was as if they were inviting him to come into the cage there, but that was nonsense, of course.

Bogash shrugged, hunched his huge shoulders and turned away.

Brute Bogash was feeling a little queer, but it was nothing that a couple of drinks and a good meal would not soon make right. The man that he had expected to see had been detained, he was told at the saloon, and would not be around till the following day. There was a restaurant that he had patronized very often in the past and he went there now, pausing in the entrance and grinning his sneering grin at the cashier inside her cage there.

In a way it was like a cell, because the cashier would be locked in it until quitting-time, and he, Bogash, was free. Free as air. Free to gloat over the cashier's plight just as he had stood and gloated over the caged monkeys, because he, Bogash, was outside there, with the cashier behind bars.

But for the tenth part of a second it seemed to the ex-convict that the girl inside the cage had looked at him queerly, with an expression of uneasiness. Uneasiness, and, maybe, a hint of shrinking—no doubt because he was a hairy and an ugly rascal, with long, simian arms.

But it was not like Bogash to think of anything, or to notice anything, for



a very long time. He sat down at one of the long tables, which, when full, seated a dozen people. The lights had not yet been turned on, and it was a little dark in the place, so that Bogash saw the man seated opposite as a shadowy figure, and then he saw something else.

Like the development of a photographic plate, something seemed to be materializing on the man's shoulder. At first it was as if a hand or a paw were laid there. And then he saw that there was a small monkey sitting there. Its outlines were blurred a little, save for the red, glaring eyes.

**T**HE beast was staring at Bogash in a malevolent concentration of hate. Tough-fibred as he was, Brute Bogash felt an icy fear clutch at his heart. He leaned forward, and the man opposite did likewise. Then Bogash knew. He was at the end of the long room, and there was nobody opposite—*because he had been looking into a mirror.*

Further along, and on the opposite side of the table, there was a man sitting, and he was a real man—no doubt about that. And just as the lights went on at that moment, Bogash could see that this man—this real man—was looking at and through him. But no sign of surprise showed on his face.

The ex-convict, with a heart that was just a taut muscle, felt himself trembling. His hand shook as he put it up to his shoulder. Seeing the man in the mirror reach up, he shook all over. There was nothing there! There was nothing, now, except his own reflection in the mirror, either. Perhaps he'd had one drink too many, he thought, not being used to it.

Bogash breathed deeply then directed himself to the meal before him, but looking again at the man—the genuine man—who sat opposite him further along. But the man was paying him no attention. He grinned sourly, turning again to the food like a famished wolf. And then the flesh and blood man opposite Bogash looked up in surprise. He saw Bogash rear up, overturning his chair, saw him wheel and lurch away from the table, to smash into a woman customer who

was threading her way among the tables.

A moment before, in the act of raising his napkin to his mouth, Bogash felt something stirring on his shoulder. He had put up his hand—to feel a something furry, something that moved and was alive there, in a hideous fellowship! It had been too much for him.

The woman he had knocked against was wearing a fur neck-piece. And, of course, it might have been that. But with the lights full on, there was the woman, with Bogash shoved up against her.

"You — you clumsy idiot," she snapped. "You—you big a—"

The last word would have been "ape" only that in the middle of it the girl gasped as if the breath had been knocked out of her, pressing herself backward against the wall. Bogash, looking neither to the right nor to the left, went lunging onward past the tables, and then past the cashier's cage, to be brought up short by the cashier's detaining call.

He swung round with a snarl, fumbling in his pocket. There was a mirror behind the cashier's stool, and he could see himself in it, eyes blood-shot, mouth open. But there was nothing else in the mirror and the cashier's expression said merely that she thought him drunk.

Bogash, outside now, hesitated for a moment, his head swinging from side to side like a bear's. Or like the huge mandril he had seen there in the primate house, and which had gnashed its long teeth at him when he had thrust the stick at the Hanuman monkey behind the bars.

**T**ENTATIVELY, standing there on the sidewalk, he raised his hand to his shoulder. He felt nothing, but it did not reassure him. Maybe—maybe he was going insane. He laughed.

But the laugh was hollow. He had spent a pretty long time in jail and that was what it did to you, sometimes, he knew. Grinding his teeth into his thick lower lip, he began to steer an erratic course through dark side streets, stopping at times for



whiskey, and then eventually finding himself in a waterfront dive with which he was familiar. The knight of the apron stared at him as if he saw a ghost.

"Hello, there, old-timer!" the bartender greeted him. The man's stare seemed to go on and through Bogash, who, ordinarily, would have cursed the barman at the drop of the hat. Instead, looking past the man and into the flyspecked mirror, he mumbled:

"You—you see anything wrong with me?"

The words seemed to come from him with an effort. The bartender gave him a queer, measuring look. He shook his head, still staring at Bogash, who shakily put up his hand. And at what he felt there on his shoulder he cursed weakly, turning and diving out again into the night. He went on now at a stumbling run, hearing behind him the *pad-pad* of running feet. The sounds rose, like the hiss and scurry of dead leaves out of the blackness. But there was no wind. And there were no leaves there. And, again, they came like the *pad-pad* of naked feet.

He stopped stock still—and the sounds ceased, as if a door had been opened and then closed on something. The air, dead, heavy, lifeless, took him by the throat. There was a dim light just ahead, and he made for it at a stumbling run. He was hungry. He had no more than begun his meal back there at that restaurant when he had been interrupted by sheer terror. Terror of what he had seen, and what he had felt and not seen. The Thing was riding on him now, because he felt it even if he could not see it on his shoulder. That unspeakable, damned, clinging furry Thing!

The cheap dive that he entered was an eating-place, of a sort. He slumped into a seat at a table, looking at the bill-of-fare, and then at his arm, with a queer expression, and at his hand. And then, with his hands pressed flat on the table-top, he stared, mouth open, at a figure seated opposite him—a man with a dark face. It was almost black and on the man's shoulder there was a small monkey, bearded, and, with a long, curling tail.

The sight was just a little too much

for Bogash. But, as he jerked upward from the table, with the remnant of his sanity he was able to perceive that it was another man like himself who sat there with the monkey, a real monkey. It wasn't a reflection. He sank down again, giving an unkempt waiter his order, and he could see no look of surprise in the waiter's face.

The ex-convict, wolfing down his food, paused for a moment, putting his hand to his shoulder in a surreptitious gesture—and there was nothing there.

"You want that thee monkee he sit on your shoulder, yes?" the dark-faced man opposite him asked.

Bogash stared, as if not comprehending. "Hell, no!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "No—no— Keep it off!"

**B**UT the beast had sprung down from the organ-grinder's shoulder, and, for the first time, Bogash saw that it was the same kind of monkey, a Hanuman, as had been the one in the monkey-house. But what he did not notice was that the organ-grinder was not an Italian, nor was he a Greek.

The animal, mincing delicately toward Bogash, put out its paw.

"You call him back, you hear me?" yelled Bogash.

But the man's smile was his answer. Then, "He wants to make friends with you, sar. . . . *He knows what he is doing. It is your chance.*"

It seemed to Bogash, although he did not formulate it even in thought, that the monkey's expression was almost human. And in the back of his mind he dimly sensed that the beast was making overtures to him. And from somewhere a voice seemed to be telling him:

*"If you make friends with him it will be all right."*

Dimly he recalled what it was that the dark-faced organ-grinder had said. It didn't make sense, though. And he hated monkeys, and he wouldn't "make friends" with anybody, let alone a damn monk!

He heard the voice of the organ-man in a kind of patter, and out of it words:

"Ees vairy good monkee, sar. While I have him I make many rupees. . . . And other monkeys they do not come



near him, you see? He is the boss of them, you understand. Me, I do not know how it is—I do not ask. . . . Perhaps it is because he is a Hanuman, *the Hanuman*—”

The words ended abruptly in a scream.

Because the monkey, approaching Bogash, was holding out its paw. Its eyes, red-rimmed, were fixed on the man's eyes—and then Bogash struck.

His huge fist, curving in a short arc, took the monkey behind the ear. And then Bogash went berserk. Up-ending the table, in two strides he was upon the monkey's master, lifted him up. Snarling viciously, he hurled the little man through the restaurant window. Panting, Bogash wheeled to face the policeman who had arrived on the run from across the street.

For five seconds he stood there, swaying, as the officer, appraising his bulk, took handcuffs from his pocket. They clicked on the giant's wrist, with the ex-convict manacled to the policeman—and then Bogash went mad.

The feel of handcuffs on him roused a hatred in him as much as prison bars. And he had the strength of a gorilla. There came a wrench, a twist, a furious sustained explosion of movement—and the ex-convict was free. There was the whine of a slug passing his ear as he stormed into the dark maw of an alley. He ran furiously now, turning and doubling out of the alley and into and through a brightly-lighted thoroughfare. Behind him, fading and then increasing, the sounds of pursuit droned in his ears.

He ran as a beast runs, in great leaps, so that as he swung round a street-corner he nearly knocked down a woman who had just come out of a store. The woman, her mouth open but with the scream dead in her throat, saw him and fainted. Bogash, hurdling her prostrate figure in a bound, leaped frenziedly forward. An alley with its high board fence loomed in his path.

**A** CAT, its green eyes lambent, spat at him and then, in a furry ball, shot outward, to disappear as the fugitive went up the ten-foot board-wall and then along it. Reaching up and grasping a water-pipe, Bogash made a

ten-foot swing to an inch-wide window-ledge, and from that outward along a clothes-line and down the clothes-pole. Then across a backyard, and through a door there, and so to the street.

Behind him he heard shouts and the pounding of running feet. Breath wheezing in his throat, he halted, flexing and unflexing his huge hands. Stooping forward a little, he snarled at a man who came running round the corner. The man, seeing him, slid forward as if trying to stop himself, and then turned. His face was ashen, his hands beat at the air as he ran. Bogash, whirling, lunged forward and then stopped. His huge hands were pressed flat against what seemed to be an invisible wall there.

It was a shop-window, and at what he saw reflected in it he went quite mad then, but with the strength running out of him in a gush. As in a dream he heard voices raised in a blasting chorus of wonder and disbelief. And then it seemed to him that he was trapped in a cage.

The hurry-up wagon, he guessed dazedly, but it was not the wagon. It was—but it couldn't be—a huge cage with steel bars that went up and up. And in there with him were such horrors as might be seen only in dreams. Eyes, red eyes. . . . They were coming closer, so that a weird, piercing scream was torn from his throat. . . .

The head-keeper of the monkey-house sprang up suddenly from his chair. He had been dozing, but now, at the spine-tingling sound that reached him, he found himself five feet away from his seat, and standing. It was a blood-chilling scream that cut short his slumber.

He shouted, and the assistant-keeper came running. His face, in the dim glow from the night-light, was paper pale. With the assistant at his shoulder the head-keeper raced for the great cage. The sound of that eerie scream was shut off suddenly as if it had been smothered, and a series of high-pitched inhuman outcries followed it. But the first weird scream had been that of a man—or at least it had sounded like it.

Shoulder to shoulder, the running



men heard, an indescribable tumult, with an undercurrent in it like that of a quarry worried by dogs.

Reaching the huge cage, the head-keeper switched on the full blaze of the lights, and then stopped short. He stared in disbelief, his mouth open, at what he saw. Outside, on the concrete as well as on the walls, blood had been spattered. But the inmates of the great cage were quiet, unmoving—all save one. The Hanuman monkey. It clung to the bars now, looking at the head-keeper and then sliding downward, went up on its perch.

The two men, standing there, turned their heads as a man toward a far corner. And there, as they went closer to investigate, was something at which the head-keeper, his gaze in a fixed staring, drew in his breath.

**T**HERE was something that lay there, but for a moment it was difficult to tell whether it might be human or inhuman. Whatever it was, it had been ripped and torn apart so that it was no more than a mangled horror of blood and bones.

The head-keeper nodded, as if to himself. A glance at the cage's occupants was all that was needed to tell him that they were all there. All, that is, except the most recent addition—a huge beast that had been brought in not two hours before. It had been found, oddly enough, by a policeman in pursuit of a fugitive who had somehow evaded him; disappearing as if into a Fourth Dimension ready to hand.

And the huge ape appearing sud-

denly there in the street, had been subdued by the cop with the aid of some courageous onlookers. But the ape, the cop reported, had seemed to be in a daze.

The officer had phoned the zoo which had sent a car for the beast. And the head-keeper remembered that it had taken six strong men to force it into the cage. The ape probably wandered away from some private menagerie, the head-keeper had thought. But there were none nearer than five hundred miles. And how it could have, unseen and unreported, been found where it was. . . .

And Dr. Martenis, the curator, had shaken his head. Because the new arrival had, precisely, defied classification. It had the characteristics of chimpanzee and of baboon. The assistant, leaning forward to see better, was pointing at something. But for the moment the other man was remembering also something else that the curator had said:

"I don't just like it, McNally," Martenis had told him. "Because, did you happen to notice the way the Hanuman—the Entellus, you know—acted when this new one was brought in? Sometimes I'm certain that that little devil knows as much as a living man! And you know who Hanuman himself is supposed to be, don't you? The—the Monkey God!"

The head-keeper, at a whispered word from his assistant, looked up and saw the huge forearm, severed at the elbow; and on it at the wrist a metallic something that glinted under the light. A kind of bracelet with a short length of chain attached to it.



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# TIME TO KILL

By HENRY KUTTNER

*Author of "The Citadel of Darkness," "The Hunt," etc.*



THE city waited, in anxiety and terror, for the next bombardment. Already air-fleets and giant guns had brought flaming ruin; streets were littered with broken masonry and glass, though all corpses had been speedily removed.

Perfect organization took no risk of plague. Day after day we looked up and saw planes hovering against the blue, watching, watching. Far away the cannon thundered and men with fixed bayonets battled by the light of star-shells and were shot and stabbed and caught on the wire.

For us, behind the lines, in the waiting city, it was far worse. Our nerves jolted, our minds cried out silently in rebellion against the madness of war. Insanity was in the tense air that brought to us the sound of bellowing repercussions and the crash of toppling buildings.

Each night we had a blackout. In the day we crept through the streets fearfully, visiting our razed homes and once-familiar landmarks, wondering when the war would end. Those of us who remembered 1918 felt it might not end till mankind had been destroyed.

But it is not of the war I am writing—that still goes on, very dreadfully—it is of Rudolph Harmon that I wish to speak. Of Harmon, and his strange telepathic power.

I met him first in the partly destroyed office building which some of the homeless had made their headquarters. The first floor was nearly undamaged, and part of the second; the rest was ruin. Families lived in some of the offices, amid salvaged bed-clothing, and, for the lucky ones, army cots. There were pitiful at-

tempts to make the ratholes homelike—a mirror, a carpet, a picture or two on the walls. For the most part, however, we used the building only as a place to sleep and hide. One looks for little more when at any moment the devastating shells may rush down out of the skies.

I was alone, my wife and child dead in the first air-raid. And the office in which I had bestowed my blankets was already occupied by Harmon, a lean, gaunt, nervous fellow of thirty or so with rather bulging eyes and a scrubby mustache. We made an odd pair, for I was short-set, stocky and clean shaven, built more like a wrestler than the physician I had been before our world ended with the undeclared war.

Crises exclude formalities. I entered with my blankets, there was a question, a grunt, and a nod, and after that the two of us lived together amicably enough, though with some disinterest. Now the office had belonged, I think, to an importer, and what happened to him I cannot say. He was probably dead. His desk was still there, and his stenographer's, with a useless lamp on each and a typewriter broken on the floor.

A dictaphone and a transcriber were in the corner, and Harmon, who was a mechanic of sorts, amused himself by trying to repair these. Very luckily, the building had its own power plant in the cellar, and so we could cook and use electric lights whenever we found an unbroken bulb, which was not often. No illumination could be displayed at night, of course. The soldiers were strict about that, at least at first before they were all called to the front. But by that time we had learned the theory of the blackout.

I had little to do with Harmon for a time. Conversation is difficult when nervous strain is so intense and unrelenting. We smoked a good deal,





*Harmon's Mind Received  
the Thundering Torrent  
of Wave-Impulses that  
Flowed from the Brain  
of a Killer!*

My hands tightened  
on the old man's  
throat

drank surprisingly little, and thought entirely too much. Meanwhile the war went on unceasingly.

And day or night we could hear the far, faint rumbling of the guns, and after dark their flashes beating like heat lightning over the horizon.

It is difficult to describe the atmosphere of the city during those days, which have not yet ended. One's skin becomes unendurably sensitive, as though all the nerve-endings were exposed. One's brain winces from sudden discordant sounds, and there is always the feeling of expectancy, the momentary dread of hearing the shrill scream of displaced air that precedes the explosion. Though we certainly,

at last, would have welcomed a shell to end the unendurable eternity of waiting, not knowing what to do, seeing no solution and no hope. The mind, balked of the outlet of action, turns inward and devours itself. Spleen, jaundice, ennui—none of us was quite normal.

In fact, such an atmosphere might be calculated to upset or suspend normal laws, not only of habit and thought, but those rooted in unchanging stability. The very earth seemed unfamiliar beneath our feet; it assumed an aspect of alienage, and seemed as though at any time it might change and shudder and disintegrate into chaos. Faces seemed different,



and eyes. One had time to analyze them, to realize the mystery in the simplest things, the articulation of a muscle, the ability of the optic nerve, and of all the other senses. I must stress this point, for it is significant in view of what followed.

Harmon repaired his dictaphone and amused himself by dictating into the machine, keeping an audible diary of the days as they went by. There was little enough to record. By day a skeleton army cleared away the corpses and patrolled the city. At night the army was scarcely a squadron, without lights, for the beam even of an electric torch was dangerous. The stratosphere planes and balloons had powerful telescopes, and one by one our own protecting air-force was ordered to the front.

So we waited, doing trivial and foolish things because we needed an outlet for our emotions and thoughts and energies. The nervous strain poured unceasingly into our brains and men and women found various methods of relieving it.

Liquor, sensuality, sudden outbreaks of violence—all these outlets, and others, were undammed.

**W**EEK after week went by; still Harmon and I occupied the same room. We grew to hate it. But we never became really friendly; it was not dislike, but indifference. The food supply began to fail, and we shared whatever we could forage. This, too, was merely a matter of convenience and foresight. One day I came in with a few cans of soup, meat, and one of tuna—I remember the latter especially, for it turned out to be bad—and found Harmon seated before the dictaphone transcriber staring at it intently, the earphones clamped over his head. He started when he saw me and hastily turned off the machine.

"Well," I said, throwing down my booty, "we'll eat for a time, anyway. I'm worried about water, though. A guardsman told me the reservoir was bombed."

The news did not affect Harmon perceptibly. He scratched his mustache nervously, and his bulging eyes

watched me with an unreadable expression. I went to the window and looked out.

"Two planes," I said. "At the front they're being shot down in droves. There's a new kind of incendiary magnetized bullet—"

"Stanley," Harmon said abruptly, "I wish you'd listen to this record."

"Eh? What—"

"I'm—afraid, a bit," he told me. "It's a dream, a hallucination, or madness. I don't know which. Last night, you see, I dictated something while I was in a trance. At least I wasn't fully conscious, though I wasn't asleep either. You've heard of automatic writing. It was rather like that—automatic speech. Except that I seemed to be dreaming too. I was"—he coughed and looked away—"committing a murder. It wasn't me, though. My mind, my perception, seemed to be in someone else's body. And my voice was giving my thoughts as they went through my brain. It was, well, horrible enough."

"Nerves, perhaps," I said. "Let's hear it."

Harmon gave me the headpiece. I adjusted the phones over my ears, and moved the needle to the beginning of the record. The wax cylinder rotated. I slowed it down a trifle and listened.

At first I heard only an indistinguishable muttering. This changed to disconnected words, and then to a coherent monologue. Harmon watched me closely. His face was rather pale. And, after a time, I understood why.

For on the record were the thoughts of a killer, confused, chaotic, in the beginning:

"Shadows . . . building shadows . . . jagged . . . thrown by the moon. Stay in shadow. They protect. One can hide from the sky . . . the sky presses down, a pall, smothering, crouching. Death ready to leap out of it. But death doesn't leap. If it would, God, if it would . . . no, just waiting. Unendurable. Bombs, shells, bloody rain. Something to tear away the blanket on my brain . . . hot, oppressive. I'm calm outwardly. In my brain is seething, raging turmoil. The thoughts beat, beat, in uneven tides . . . this



away below the threshold. To break the broken silence. I dare not scream. Don't. Don't. That would rip off the blanket and leave the brain exposed, palpitating . . . stay in the shadows. Slink along the street, dodging the moonlit patches."

For a space, silence, and the scratching of the record. Then the voice resumed:

"My brain moves, turns sickeningly in my skull. Too full of thoughts and fear. Hate. Sorrow. Emotions. What can I do? The front . . . is certain death. Why do I cling to life? The war may end tomorrow. But we can never leave the city. It isn't on earth any more. The air even is changed. It pulses with vibrations of dehumanized emotion. Like electricity beating at the brain. Supercharged brains. Some outlet, some escape.

"Ah, God, something is moving near me, something spawned here where normal laws are transcended, materializing . . . a dog. Small. Leg broken. Its fur is soft. Fur about its throat. . . . My hands are white in the moonlight against black, silken hair. My hands . . . tighten . . . softly, tenderly . . . my fingers are strong; see the tendons stand out. My brain . . . tides of thought are bursting through the blanket that smothers it. There's cold air blowing on my brain. The shadows are jumping toward me. Swooping. Shutting out the horrible sky. I'm in a cave. The shadows guard me. A cold brain, and my fingers filled with ecstatic aching. My hands are releasing the energy that was bottled up in my brain. The dog's dead."

Again the needle scratched softly, rhythmically.

I glanced at Harmon. He made a peremptory gesture. I heard the voice once more:

"Not enough. Not enough energy released. Brain turning, rocking . . . this is the right way, though. But not a dog. Not enough energy released. Not enough. . . . Light on brass buttons. Khaki uniforms. Asleep. A soldier, leaning against a wall, his gun nearly out of reach. He doesn't hear me. His collar is unbuttoned; it's a warm night. The pulse beats under

the skin; a blue vein throbs. Can I approach silently? Yes, he doesn't hear. I move the rifle a few feet further away. Now I stand directly in front of the man. My arms lift. The energy is draining out of my brain into my arms. The throbbing in my skull isn't as sickening . . . perhaps this is enough. No. The energy will rush back unless I. . . .

"The shadows poise to leap. Softly, tenderly, my hands tighten about the soldier's throat. Now, now, leap, shadows, guard me, swiftly, volcanically. A thundering torrent floods from my brain, through my arms, into my hands, down to the fingers that release the power. . . . He is dead. His spine cracked almost inaudibly. Let him lie there. Calm, quiet. The sky isn't pressing down any more. A wind blows cool and refreshing on my bare brain. . . ."

I had reached the end of the record. I turned off the dictaphone, removed the earphones, and swung to face Harmon. He tugged at his mustache, his lips quivering.

"Well?" he asked.

"Subjective," I said. "You're not mad. Nervous hysteria may cause somnambulism. You walked in your sleep, that's all."

"Yes," he said. "But a soldier was found this morning strangled on the street down by the river."

I fingered the stubble on my chin. "So? There have been coincidences before."

"I went down to see the body," Harmon said, "but it had been taken away. Then I walked around a bit till I saw a dead dog. A black spaniel with a broken leg. I—I—" His eyes protruded even more than usual; he wet his dry lips. "Could I have—"

I grinned and touched Harmon's thin arm. "Could you have strangled a husky soldier? Broken his neck? What do you think?"

**H**E looked relieved for a moment, but immediately his brows drew together. "Insanity is supposed to give you abnormal strength."

"Perhaps. But I strongly doubt whether you could strangle a man thus. I was a general practitioner, not



a psychiatrist, but I know something about such matters. Besides, how could you go out and kill a soldier while you were dictating a cylinder full?"

"I thought of that," Harmon said. "But I might have been dictating from memory."

"Did you go out last night?"

"I don't remember going out. I went to sleep about nine-thirty. Then suddenly I found myself at the dictaphone, in a sort of trance. When I'd finished talking, everything seemed to go black. I don't know how much later, I woke up completely. I looked at my watch. It was a little after two. You were asleep, but I almost woke you—I needed to talk to someone."

"I'm sorry you didn't," I said.

I went to the window once more, staring unseeingly at a gutted skyscraper across the deserted street, hearing the low drone of a plane high above.

"Can't you figure out any sort of explanation?" Harmon asked.

"I don't know. It isn't in materia medica. It's just an idea, a pretty fantastic one. If what you dictated was true—"

"Yes?"

"Then you read someone's mind. Telepathy hasn't been proved so far, though experiments have pointed rather conclusively to its possibility. The brain is a mysterious organ, Harmon. There's little really known about it. The pineal gland, for example, is something of an enigma. And the nature of thought itself—well!"

I lit half a cigarette. "Matter and thought are vibration. Vibrations are wave-impulses and can be transmitted under favorable conditions. The conditions here are extraordinary. Mentally we're all rather haywire. It's in the air. Your mind isn't normal, under this strain, and therefore it may be sensitive enough to get in telepathic rapport with some other mind."

Harmon pondered. "But why don't I have this rapport all the time, then? Why just for ten minutes or so last night?"

"The thoughts you got were conceived under tremendous emotional strain. If my theory is correct, this

murderer is mad. Superficially he may not show it, I should be surprised if he did. Iron, rigid self-control denied him a more normal mental outlet. He forced himself to restrain the avalanche piling up in his brain. If he'd have got drunk, for example, he'd have been safe. But inhibitions prisoned him till the flood burst into a channel that would normally have been blocked up.

"I have seen murderers psychoanalyzed, Harmon. They didn't want to kill, as a rule. But they were denied other sources of emotional release, or thought they were. Jack the Ripper was such a case. His fear complex led him to butcher women instead of—marrying, for example. If normal channels are blocked, the flood entered abnormal channels."

Harmon held the wax cylinder in his hand. Suddenly he threw it down violently on the floor, where it cracked and shattered.

"You may be right enough," he said, "but there's still something wrong with my mind, eh?"

"I wouldn't say wrong. Nothing that relief from strain can't cure."

"That's easy to get," Harmon said with heavy irony.

We were silent, listening to the low thunder of the great cannon at the front.

**T**HE slow days passed wearily. Some left the city, but not many, for starvation waited in the ravaged countryside. In the metropolis one could hope to find food and water, by dint of diligent searching. We were trapped here, bound by invisible fetters. We were the damned. And Harmon suffered and grew haggard under the strain. His eyes were unnaturally bright, his cheeks red and feverish, his lips cracked. A week later there was a recurrence of his telepathic visitation.

I came in one night, bearing a meager supply of food, to find Harmon crouching above the dictaphone waiting for me. His whole gaunt body was trembling, and his face was a white, bearded mask.

"It's happened again," he said. "An hour ago."



Silently I put down my booty and adjusted the earphones. Vague moonlight filtered through the cracked windows now grimy and dirt-smeared. Harmon was a vague shadow as he leaned against the wall, half-hidden amid the gloom.

Once more I heard the eerie voice:

"Walk, walk, walk. Faster. Expend the energy in my brain. But walk warily. Not in the moonlight. Not under the crushing sky, lest it fall. Hear the guns. Each sound adds a charge to the already overcharged currents in my brain. Killing the dog and the soldier wasn't enough. The potential keeps building up again. I need another release. The shadows won't protect me; they flee, slide away, shrink from me, leaving me exposed to the hammer of the sky. I must kill again.

"This building I am passing . . . people sleep here, refugees. And no doors are locked these days. The hall is very dark. In the corner . . . what is it? A black, shapeless bundle. Someone, wrapped in quilts, asleep. An old man. My eyes are accustoming themselves to the gloom. I seem to see very clearly. It's the energy in my brain; light is energy, of course . . . the guns keep hammering. There's a plane going past, I can hear it.

"And here are the shadows following me. They tell me to kill. They'll protect me, guard me . . . the old man wheezes and groans in his sleep. His neck is withered and scrawny. Its texture is scaly with the wrinkles of age, a webwork of tiny wrinkles. I drop on one knee beside him. Silence, vague moonlight from the open door, and the rhythmic movement of breath stirring parchment-yellow skin. And now the energy drains from my brain, and the pounding grows less violent.

"The shadows lean above me, poised to leap. Softly, tenderly, my hands tighten about the old man's throat. Storm of ecstasy! Of relief, flooding, bursting gates that crumble under the onslaught, leaving my brain cold and quite motionless . . . there is only the slight ache in my fingers, sunk in livid flesh. And it is over. He is dead. My brain is free, at peace. The sky is no longer terrifying. The noise of

the guns no longer shakes the citadel of my mind. I am relaxed, utterly, joyously. . . ."

The record ended.

"I know what you'll say," Harmon said nervously. "Telepathy. But that doesn't make it any more pleasant for me. There's a mad killer somewhere in the city, and—and—God knows where it may end!"

"Harmon," I said, "Why don't you go into the country? Anywhere. It's not important. A change of atmosphere is the thing."

"Where can I go?" he asked. "We're in hell here. We can't get out of it. The whole land—the entire world, for that matter. . . ." Harmon was silent, brooding. "It's the end. Man's committing suicide. We can't escape. All my relationships, all my ties with life, were cut during the first raid. There's nothing left. I don't know. . . ."

He dropped his head in his hands and massaged his temples. I stood wordlessly contemplating him.

"Why not smash the dictaphone?" I said finally.

Perhaps Harmon thought I intended irony.

"It's easy for you to talk," he snapped angrily. "You're so damned cold-blooded you've got ice-water in your veins. You can't understand how I feel. . . ."

I grunted and turned away, conscious of a hot resentment toward Harmon. I, too, had suffered losses as bad as his own. How dared he assume that because I showed little emotion, I felt nothing underneath? There was a scene I hadn't let myself recall—the ruins of my house, and the sight that told me I was wifeless and childless.

I forced my thoughts to safer ground. Some things are too horrible to remember.

**A** FORTNIGHT later I came home after midnight, empty-handed. In my stomach was a dull, insistent ache of hunger. The specter of starvation brooded over the city, taking the place of the planes that had vanished days before. We were alone in a world of the dead. Only the noise of the guns, intermittent now, yet some-



how more frantically murderous than ever, told us that others besides ourselves were alive.

Before I entered the room where Harmon waited I heard his voice. Or, rather, the voice of the dictaphone. I walked in just as the record ended.

"Hello," Harmon said dully. "It's happened again. No murder this time, though. Listen."

He got up and gave me the earphones. I started the record afresh.

It began abruptly:

"Kill, kill, before the energy tears my brain apart. Two weeks now without any release. Tonight I must find relief or die. Trying to fight down the murder impulse is useless and dangerous. Eventually it gets too strong for me. And tonight it's strong, horribly so. It's dark, very dark. No moon tonight. And there are no shadows. Just the empty sky pressing down. The guns don't sound so often now, but when they do my expectant brain rocks under the impact. I must release this frightful energy within my head. But how, where? People live in this cottage, I think. But the door is locked. A window . . . it slides up easily enough. People don't fear thieves nowadays. Let me light a match. An empty room, I hear the sound of soft breathing."

**T**HE record broke off, then resumed swiftly:

"A bedroom. Another match. Its light shows me a bed, two children asleep in it. Eight or ten years old, perhaps. Their throats are soft, white, waiting. I must kill swiftly. I cannot wait. In my head is a surging, thundering maelstrom. It pounds and shatters against the inside of my skull. No shadows to aid me. But the energy is flowing down into my arms. I must bend over the bed, over the child.

"Softly, tenderly, my hands tighten about his throat. . . . Shut up! Shut up! Damn you . . . the other boy is screaming, he's scrambled out of bed, yelling at the top of his lungs. I hear men shouting. Hurrying footsteps. No time now, no time to kill the child. The window's still open. Now I'm in the street. They're following me, bellying threats. One more minute and

I'd have strangled the boy and released the energy. But there wasn't time. Here's an alley. It's dark. And a side street. The pursuers' voices are dying away. I'm losing them. . . . I'm safe now. Safe? God, my brain's ready to explode!"

The record was finished.

I took off the earphones, and turned to face Harmon. In defiance of the air-danger, he had lit an electric lamp screening it with a handkerchief. He was sitting, now, before the dictating machine, rigid, ignoring me. I started to speak, and, suddenly, paused, watching him.

**A**TREMOR shook Harmon's gaunt body. His eyes were dilated. Slowly, automatically, he lifted the speaking-tube of the dictaphone to his lips and pressed the operating button. The needle began to slide over the wax cylinder.

"I can't stand it," Harmon said, in a dead, expressionless voice. "I can't keep the energy pressure under control any longer. My brain is throbbing, pounding, shaking in my skull. I escaped capture, but no risk is too great if it cools my brain. All the energy is back again inside my head. I must kill, swiftly, swiftly!"

There was an outburst of gunfire far away.

But Harmon did not hear it.

"The energy is moving," he went on. "The tides lift it from my brain, down my arms, into the very tips of my fingers. There it waits, ready to leap forth and escape."

Again the guns muttered ominously.

"Crouch, shadows, ready to spring! Leap to guard me! Guard me as I kill! Now—now—now!"

Suddenly Harmon gave a high-pitched, wordless shriek. The speaking-tube fell clattering from his lips. He swung around to face me, his eyes widely distended, his face yellow and glistening with sweat. A spasm of terror twisted his lips.

The guns roared.

The shadow fell on Harmon as I moved swiftly.

Softly, tenderly, my hands closed and tightened upon his throat. . . .



# Soldier, Rest

By ROBERT D. PRICE

*Author of "Dark Wanderer," "Every Wednesday," etc.*

*A New Kind of Memorial Day Awaited Cal Dudley's Restless Shade when He Sought Surcease on the Old Battlefield!*

THE sun lay heavy on woodland and furrowed field as old Cal Dudley slipped slowly, like the shadow he was, down the familiar path to the quiet glade along Antietam Creek, close by Burnside's Bridge.

The shriveled little wraith of a man was tired. The fatigue of three score and eighteen years of wandering had drained him of all energy, washed him of all strength. He ached with longing for rest.

The glade was cool and quiet, like a dim cathedral. Cal Dudley sighed a soft little sigh, as he settled down with his back propped against a tree. This was the nearest thing to peace that he had known since he had been wrenched from life to become a roving spirit, homeless and unsleeping.

Since that bloody June day of 1862, he had roamed the world, a spirit in a world of men, alone and miserable. The misty little man in regimentals of faded blue had trailed the dwindling armies of blue and of gray. He had seen them fade to a grizzled rearguard, had seen them laid to rest in honored graves while a dull twinge of envy threaded through his soul.

Always, in brief interims of semi-rest, an invisible magnet had drawn him back to this little glade, for brief surcease before the claw in his soul sent him forth again.

Now, as much alone as when he first awoke in that bloody sunset so long ago, he leaned against a tree and stared at the placid water. Even the creek had a purpose and a



The old soldier was very tired

goal—it had a channel to steer its flowing to the sea.

He had—nothing.

A lilting, happy whistle floated into the old man's reverie and a chubby little boy skipped into the clearing.

The lad was pink of cheek, his tow head was tousled. He was just such a boy as Cal Dudley once had been, a little older than the Cal, Jr., he had left behind when he marched



away to war from a farm in the nearby Pennsylvania hills.

The little old soldier smiled benevolently as the boy ran to the creek and looked down at the smooth-flowing water. High water of a week ago had undermined the bank where he stood, and the sod had crumbled away, exposing long-buried earth to the sunshine.

**H**EAVY trees were a wall against all sound. Only the delicate song of a breeze in the green leaves overhead and the silver music of the creek disturbed the stillness. Long, restless years ago, on the day Cal Dudley died with the steel of a bayonet deep between his ribs, this glade had not been such a place of peace.

Then, as now, the somnolent haze of summer had lain warmly upon the land.

The distant mountains had been veiled in thin, blue mist, the silken dust smothered the roads.

But the glade and the surrounding fields had been dim in swirling smoke and the woodland had shivered to crackling gunfire and the shrill yells of men locked in combat. The grass had turned red in the dye of their blood and the current of the creek ran pink from bank to bank.

In that mad chaos of battle, Cal Dudley had died—with the lean bulk of a soldier in butternut looming above him, and the hammer of his own revolver clicking on an empty chamber.

He had awakened in a dusk shot through with the afterglow of a crimson sunset. The spot where he had fallen had been churned to a pulp of earth by the surge of charging feet and he was adrift, condemned by an impelling urge he could not fathom, to seek a peace he could not find.

The boy picked up a round, flat rock and skimmed it across the water. He laughed in glee as it bounced into the grass on the opposite bank.

The youngster leaned down for another stone, stopped to yank at

something white protruding from the earth.

It was long and knobbed at each end, chalky, clodded with bits of dirt—a bone.

The boy's eager fingers dug again into the moist ground, laid another weathered bone beside the first. Then came a sliver of steel, brown and crusted from years of intimacy with the earth.

A mother's summons for her son sounded from the stippled shade of the nearby road, and the boy looked up brightly as a man and a woman emerged into the clearing, the man bearing a lunch basket in his hand. The boy beckoned them to the creek, pointed proudly to the bits of bone and the splinter of steel.

They looked in awe and in silence. The father knelt by the naked earth of the creek bank. His probing fingers found a button, once bright and polished, now dark and stained. Its rounded surface bore the dim outlines of two letters—"U.S."

**T**HE man held the little button in his open palm.

"Here's all that's left of a brave man—a couple of bones and a dirty button," he said, and there was a tear in his voice.

"A soldier," the woman breathed. "He's lain here all these years, just where he fell. He never had a decent grave, never had anyone to lay him to rest." A sob welled from her throat.

"It isn't too late!" The man knelt and placed the button beside the faded bones. "We can have him buried now. It would give a new significance to this Memorial Day."

His hand patted the shining hair of the silent boy. His eyes strayed to the lunch basket, forlorn and forgotten on the grass.

"We've been coming here a good many years for Memorial Day picnics," he said, "but I have a feeling this will be the best Memorial Day of all."

"You're thinking of your grandfather, aren't you? He was a brave man and he died at Antietam, too."

"I suppose he did. He was listed



as missing after the battle, you know, and the family never heard from him again. He must have been a grand man, from grandmother's tales of him, but I've never felt as close to him, even on these picnics here at Burnside's Bridge, as I do this minute. Somehow, I feel that, in honoring this old fellow, we'll be honoring grandfather, too."

There was mysticism and a knowledge of unseen things in his voice, but the syllables fell on Cal Dudley's ears like the patter of far-away rain. And when they went away, he relaxed again into the fog of fatigue that engulfed him.

But soon they came again, the man and the woman and the tow-headed boy. And with them came men bearing shovels, and men carrying cameras and sheafs of paper on which they scribbled with stubs of pencils.

All of them stood while shovels dug into the chocolate earth. Later, they stared in silent awe, as had the man and the woman before them, at a few more scraps of lifeless bone.

The bones and the button and the sliver of steel were borne reverently away, and the clearing once again was left to the unseen soldier and his uncomprehending soul. Cal Dudley merely sat beneath his tree and wondered vaguely why he did not feel impelled to resume his roaming. Peace seemed so close he could almost touch it, yet it was not quite within his grasp, not yet—

Then, in the sunset, a sunset of gold and of crimson, and of purple-lined clouds, people once more clustered in the clearing.

**ON** THEIR shoulders, they brought a box, velvet-lined and sturdy. In it reposed the chalky bones, the button and the sliver of steel.

Cal Dudley watched idly as men

again plied shovels, not on the bank this time but back under the dusky trees. They dug a little excavation, laid the box tenderly in its depths.

Suddenly—if anything that might happen to him now could be called sudden—Cal Dudley felt strength flow into his limbs. He rose, not by his own will, and walked toward the silent circle and the hole in the musty earth.

And the more sensitive in the group of onlookers felt a flutter in the air as the words of a prayer for the soul of the unknown soldier were intoned by a man in black, who spoke with head bowed low. But none of them saw the wisp of a man in blue filter through them and stand looking into the open grave as a prodigal looks at home.

Nor did they see him descend into the grave, lay down and relax in sudden ease. Calmly he closed his eyes, and turned his face to the sky, eager for the first caress of warm, falling earth.

Three score and eighteen years of roaming were ended — Cal Dudley had found peace.

The sun had gone, leaving only a faded glory in the western sky.

The last spine-prickling notes of "Taps" still vibrated in the twilight air. A little mound of earth marked where the soldier slept, at peace and at rest at last.

All the people had left save the three who had found the faded bones.

The man and the woman stood at the edge of the glade, looking back to the boy beside the grave. His little figure was straight, his hand moved up in impulsive, boyish salute.

Softly the woman called him.

And, with a lingering look at the quiet mound, Calvin Dudley 4th ran to his mother's outstretched hand.

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*Next Issue: THE DEAD SHALL RISE UP, the Story  
of a Prophecy that Defeats a Merciless Ghoul  
By TALLY MASON*





# THE PANTING BEAST

By JOHN CLEMONS

*Author of "Chameleon Eyes," "Death Bridge," etc.*

## CHAPTER I

### *The Dregs of Passion*

**N**OT for the world could Stanton have told you when it was that he first came to hate Tom Arden. Why, yes; but not when. The transition from strong affection to virulent hatred had not been noticeable on the surface, not even to Stanton himself.

The corrosive inroads had been slow, imperceptible, cankerous. Until that day when, watching Arden in his kennels, Stanton realized the shocking truth—that his heart had been systematically fed on hatred and was filled, now, to overflowing.

The trouble had not started with the dogs, but it ended there. Stanton found it impossible to reconcile himself to the fact that Arden's passion-

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A COMPLETE WEIRD NOVELET

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*When Man Dares to Trifle with  
the Soul of a Woman in Love,  
Human Throats Await the Fangs  
of the Greedy Hounds of Hell*



The brute grasped Arden by the throat



ate fondness for dogs had grown to an obsession of such enormous sweep, as to exclude human affection as an undesirable encroachment on his time.

Arden had not always been so unsociable. There was a time when he had been jolly and sought feminine company. Then a beautiful Irish girl, fresh from the old sod, had gone to work for him. A strange girl of quiet reserve, with a queer, old-world name as intriguing as her rare, brooding beauty: Deidre Cuilinn.

Both men had immediately fallen in love with her. But it was Stanton who had won her, with his oft-repeated promises of marriage. Stanton had quickly forgot his promises, when he had had his fill of the girl. And when she saw that he meant to desert her, the girl fell ill. She began to fade, uncomplainingly, still clinging to her shreds of dignity.

It was now that Stanton came to Tom Arden for advice. There was something about Deidre's quiet, accusing eyes that put strange fear in his heart. So he left the matter up to Arden. If his friend advised it, Stanton was willing to marry the girl.

But Arden was still simmering from his defeat; his pride had been touched when his heart had been wounded. He advised Stanton against marriage. And the girl had died soon afterward.

It was after the death of Deidre that the two friends began to feel a strain in their relations. Stanton had continued much as before, for he found this made it easier to forget. But Arden had become sullen and moody. Somewhere he had learned that Deidre was the name of a goddess of dazzling beauty, in a myth handed down from the druids. To ease his mind he sought a new interest, and so became engrossed in dogs.

So Tom Arden had moved to the country and built a house. Or rather, he built a kennel and added a house as an afterthought. Stanton was now deprived of his friend's company of an evening, but resented this less than the bitterly humiliating knowledge that a lot of slavering, yapping, eternally hungry canines had come

between them. Theirs had been a rare friendship, dating back to childhood, further back even than either could remember.

They had been partners in everything, and still were. Everything but the dogs. Much as he disliked to take the time, Arden commuted each day from the country to the modest investment business the two men had established together in the city.

But Arden's conversation began to be so filled with the marvelous exploits of his dogs, whose remarkable improvement he attributed to the country air, that Stanton's objections became more and more perfunctory when Arden found excuses to take an early train for home.

**B**ETWEEN ordinary business partners this sort of conduct must soon lead to a breach. But Stanton fought down his resentment, keeping ever before his mind's eye a picture of Tom Arden as a faultless youth, companion of his boyhood days, chum of his younger years, sharer of youthful ambitions and fancies, fellow-traveler on romantic flights into shadowy dream-worlds...

Inevitably, Arden began to take whole days off. First the wolfhound was sick. Then the champion blue-ribbon winner of the most recent dog show, a mighty Bernard, was going to have pups. Not a week went by but Tom Arden must manage to squeeze an extra day or two out of the business calendar. Still Stanton voiced only mild resentment, preferring really to run the business himself, since Arden's mind patently was not on it.

Then came a day when Arden announced he would convert a room of his house into an office and handle most of his accounts at home. Stanton was so thoroughly disgusted by now that he raised no objections at all. He closed his heart to feeling and mentally checked off his lifelong friend as dead.

For a time the new arrangement proved happier. A direct line was installed from the office in the city to Arden's country home. The dog fancier's active interest in the business



spurted, and the partners were well pleased with the results. Occasionally Stanton visited with Arden, but the unearthly noises from the kennels invariably got on his nerves. The incessant snarling, the blatant barking and yapping, always sent him home sooner than he had intended, usually with a sick headache and an upset stomach.

For some months matters went on in this manner, not wholly satisfactory to Stanton but tolerable enough, until an argument over a silver mine in Canada abruptly brought things to a head. Stanton had instituted a private investigation, and the report he received proved the mine to be one of those rare investments a man happens across perhaps once in a lifetime.

Overjoyed, Stanton had immediately driven out to the country to consult with his partner. But to his utter consternation he found that Arden was personally not interested in making investments, no matter how fabulously promising—except in his dog kennels.

"Come on out to the kennels," Arden had proudly told him. "I want to show you my latest acquisition."

Stanton had followed simply because he was still bent on arguing. He mentally stuffed his ears as they approached the clamoring dogs, which increased their howls with every step the two men took. The din was deafening when the two partners finally stopped. They had to shout to make themselves heard.

Arden gave Stanton a stout club and picked one up for himself.

"She's a killer!" he shouted.

Stanton gave a sudden start at that and Arden grasped his sleeve.

"She knows what the club is for," Arden assured him. "She'll behave."

He opened a wire cage and before Stanton realized it, he was in the cage with Arden and the door was closed.

Stanton took one look at the tawny brute in the corner, and the hair on his head began to hurt his scalp—he felt he could count each hair by its separate stab of pain. The dog was at least six feet from the tip of her wet muzzle to the beginning of her tail. Stanton had never seen a dog so

big. Her coat was shaggy; she was quiet, but in her yellow eyes shone an almost human intelligence.

"Irish wolfhound," Tom Arden explained. "They grow pretty big. This one is an exceptionally fine specimen. She's just had pups."

"How are the pups doing?" Stanton asked, just to be pleasant.

A crooked smile crossed Arden's face. His eyes narrowed. He looked directly into the big brute's eyes, but Stanton fancied that the quiet dog was unafraid, was in fact challenging her supposed master.

"What about the pups?" Stanton said again.

"They're dead. She killed them."

"Eh—"

"She ate them."

"Oh!"

STANTON fell back until he felt the solid wire mesh behind him. He gripped his club hard. He felt sweat warming his body. On his face was a look of unutterable loathing.

"Lucky I kept her separated from the others," Arden went on. "She'd have eaten them. Once in a while we run across cannibal dogs — not often. I should shoot her—it will likely save a lot of trouble. But she's such a fine specimen— Well, I'll take the next litter away from her."

All this time the dog hadn't moved a muscle, hadn't by even the flicker of a cold yellow eye admitted she was cowed by sight of the clubs. Privately Stanton doubted if the threat of those clubs worried the dog at all. He wondered why she didn't bark like the rest. There was something — something not *normal* about it!

"She's that way all the time," Arden said. "Never barks, never restless; always quiet. A strange animal. But then, she'd have to be to eat her own litter!"

Stanton gurgled and choked and finally exploded.

"Let's get out of here!"

The great dog's almost human eyes fixed both the partners as they backed out of the big cage. Stanton would have sworn there was contempt in that gaze.

The moment the door shut behind



them the big dog relaxed. When Stanton looked back, she was stretched full length on the dirt floor, panting, her jaws wide, her tongue hanging out. She didn't bother to watch them out of sight. Stanton had a horrible fancy that she was laughing at them.

"Confound it, man!" he exclaimed. "You must be mad! Wasting your life on a pack of beasts who smell to high heaven, and would as soon eat you as any of your fancy dog foods! Sooner or later you'll bankrupt yourself with your confounded kennels. You'll need a mint of money behind you, like this silver mine in Canada—"

Arden stubbornly refused to listen.

"If it's such a good thing," he said, reasonably enough, "you should have no trouble getting some of our clients to go in with you."

And there the matter rested.

Stanton could not swing the deal by himself. But he could, as Tom Arden pointed out, get the extra cash that he needed without difficulty. Perversely, since it meant no extra profit to himself, it made Stanton unreasonably angry to think that his friend would let this marvelous opportunity slip by — in favor of his dumb brutes. Thinking to melt his friend's resistance for Arden's own good, Stanton stayed over night for the first time.

All night long the dogs howled. The dismal discord was almost more than Stanton could bear. Sleep was out of the question for him. From time to time he dozed fitfully, but was always up after a few moments, usually with a bound that carried him half out of his bed.

Then he would pace the floor like a lunatic, praying for morning. If he shut the windows, the air was stifling, and the horrible animal cries came through anyway, only little subdued.

Every single moment of this torture was making Stanton madder and madder. He came at last to the not unlikely conclusion that he had made a mistake in trying to force the issue with his friend; decided, in fact, that he would not have Arden in on the deal in any circumstances. No, not even if Tom Arden were to get down on his knees and beg to get in.

The damn fool would only spend the money on more dogs, anyway! Why, Arden had changed so, he was like a different man. He was crazy! He couldn't be trusted with money any more than a child could be left alone with matches.

Just before dawn a ground mist made a lake of milk around the house. It was like a shock absorber to the awful animal cries. The brutes made only faint baying echoes which the exhausted Stanton could afford to ignore after the nerve-racking, night-long cacophony. He fell asleep, cursing Arden and his dogs and the obligations prescribed by long friendship.

## CHAPTER II.

### *Greed's Naked Fangs*

STANTON'S sleep was not restful, it was too troubled with bad dreams. He dreamed that Arden was standing in the middle of his kennels with a baton in his hand, leading the awful animal chorus like a mad music master. The sleeping man tried to rouse, but an overpowering terror took possession of him.

He felt that his mind was subjugated to a greater will than his own. He felt he must be an agent for someone else's thoughts, someone able to think, but incapable of expression—*some animal?* He continued to dream. The horrible feeling that this was less a dream than an awful projection of thought-pictures persisted. But Stanton could not rouse himself, though he continued to struggle.

Then in his dreams he saw the monstrous Irish wolfhound. She was still stretched in the dirt, still panting; not barking, not crying, apparently too proud or too dignified to join in with the rest. And as he watched, Stanton saw a terrible thing happen.

The great beast rose slowly, with unconscious dignity. For a moment her cold yellow eyes that seemed so almost human regarded the strange procedure of the master leading the soul-jarring chorus with critical con-



tempt. Stanton became suddenly filled with a frightful prescience of evil, and ceased his somnolent struggles. Then the massive beast opened her jaws—and *began to sing!*

Never in his life had Stanton heard such ringing resonance of tone, such silvery sweetness of scale, such measured, melodious music — though the song itself was wild, utterly of another world. The other dogs stopped their meaningless yowling and Arden, the mad music master, stopped too, fascinated.

Then, as she sang, the great dog subtly began to change. Little by little her shaggy coat dropped away. Little by little, yet with forceful purpose, all animalism left her.

Stanton screamed in his sleep. He floundered in an awful sea of emotion. He tried to fight the turbulent tide of terror that swept over and engulfed him. But to no avail. He had to watch while the great shaggy dog turned into an incredibly beautiful woman before his very eyes. Into—*Deidre!*

Undraped she was, with a body almost impossibly perfect. And hair like her eyes, the color of sunned seaweed. Tall she was, of a height suited to a goddess in a wild Irish myth. Her skin was of an alabaster whiteness, yet not cold, not forbidding, but alive-looking, tempting, like the skin of a sentient human being.

She opened her cage and stepped out in the dawn, still singing. With a smile like the Lorelei she held Arden, the music master, immobile. And as she walked she opened the cages. Yelping, snarling, ever-hungry brutes leaped out, but not at her—at Arden.

"Arden! Arden! They're going to eat you!" Stanton cried out frantically.

Tom Arden tried to fight off the beasts with his little baton. It was like stopping the wind with a straw. The slaving dogs bore him to the ground with one concerted rush. Tom Arden screamed for help while they ravished his flesh. They crowded round the mangled man and tore and tore, and ripped and ripped—and still Arden kept screaming.

Then at last the pack was gluttoned. All but the exquisitely radiant dream-

woman slunk back to their cages. A picked white skeleton, all that remained of Arden, shone gleaming wet where the pack had feasted. And the foul skeletal thing that had been a man screamed, screamed, screamed.

Stanton awoke in a sea of sweat. He sat up quickly, shaking, dazed, filled with tremendous terror. But no one screamed; no one called for help. A shining sun had dispelled the white mist of dawning. A peaceful pastoral scene greeted him through the open window.

The dogs, creatures of nocturnal habit, were quiet in the bright blaze of day. Stanton shook his head in furious self-condemnation, mouthing low, bitter curses.

"Of all the damned, impossible, absurd, inconceivable nightmares—"

And then he heard the horrible scream.

He did not at once leap out of bed. He spent precious long seconds telling himself he had heard nothing. But the scream came again. Stanton jumped out of bed in his borrowed pajamas. He started to pull on his trousers, but the scream came again. Extreme urgency was in each tremulous tone.

**T**HE air was laden with unspeakable horror, saturated with dread beyond human understanding. Stanton kicked his trousers aside and then dashed out of the room. He sped through the house but stopped at the front door.

Arden was essentially an outdoors man, his living room filled with trophies of the hunt, of the race, of dog shows and horse shows. The walls were loaded with animal heads, blue ribbons, yellow and white ribbons. But more important, they were overburdened with guns. Guns, rifles, and knives of all nations.

The dreadful dream still fresh in his mind, Stanton's heart pounded with fearful foreboding. He snatched a six-gun off the wall and made sure it was loaded. The thing was of great caliber and could blast a man in two. Then Stanton ran from the house, down the runway to the kennels, not daring to think what he would find,



holding his thoughts in check for the benefit of sheer sanity.

But the exercise of running seemed to modify Stanton's fears. As his bare feet padded, his wild heart beat less with weird and portentous apprehension than with the unaccustomed physical exertion. He began to think that it might be some tramp who had wandered into the kennels and was now being worried by one of the animals Arden had let out of its cage.

Surely it could not be Arden who was screaming! Tom Arden had been around dogs too long to be frightened by them now. The impossible dream Stanton dismissed, and rightly, in the revealing light of day as utterly incompatible with reason. That the wretched screams continued simply proved to him that Arden was not about.

He seemed to remember now that Arden had mentioned having to go into the village in the morning. But why hadn't Arden awakened him? And why were the dogs so ominously quiet?

Stanton pulled up short before the kennels, strangling a little, for he wanted to pant but couldn't. The sudden sweat that laved his face now was not from the labor of running. It was from fear, from dismay, from petrified amazement. One shocking certainty was that Arden had definitely not gone into town.

For it was Arden who was screaming. Not the moist bones of the man, as Stanton had dreamed, but Arden in the flesh, which was almost as improbable. Stanton was afraid to think what fantastic thing had happened that could change the manly and resolute Arden into a screaming mockery of a man. He dreaded the thought; because, remembering the dream, it occurred to him that he *knew*.

Arden was in the big she-dog's cage. He had a club in his hand, but was obviously too terrified to realize it. Nor did it appear on the surface that there was undue cause for alarm. The giant wolfhound seemed meek, docile, quiet as usual. Why, then, was Tom Arden screaming?

Then Stanton saw the glaze in his friend's eyes, felt more fearfully cer-

tain than ever that *it was something Arden had seen!*

Stanton had never given the brutes much credit for intelligence. Yet instead of the mournful accompaniment normally expected of them in these circumstances, they now huddled in the farthest corners of their cages, whimpering, shivering and terrified. What had the animals seen?

He was afraid to answer that question. Yet on the surface there was certainly no harm in the big dog. Stanton felt that to shoot her was to admit—he hated the thought—of witchery, necromancy, all the black arts. To give credence to that foul incubus of terror that had visited him in the night.

So, instead, he tried to reason with Arden. He soothed him with low, normal tones, and after considerable effort calmed the man sufficiently to make himself understood.

"Back out of the cage," Stanton told him. "The dog won't harm you. You have a club in your hand; and anyway, I have a gun here."

Arden's whimpering acquiescence sounded strangely animal-like. He backed up a step—and the big dog moved a step forward, began to pant, lightly. Arden backed up again—and again the dog moved forward. In a new access of base and utter panic, Arden turned and bolted for the door.

**B**UT though he moved with incredible swiftness, the wolfhound glided by and intercepted his headlong flight at the barrier. The dog alternately panted and paused, panted and paused, eyeing the man in her cage gently, disarmingly. To Stanton outside with the gun, she paid no attention whatever.

Tom Arden began to back away, making pitiful mewling sounds, again oddly animal, tremendously terrifying, coming from a human throat. Stanton noted, too, that his eyes rolled wildly, distorted, showing the whites. Tom Arden's sweat-soaked face was drained of all color; a hundred new lines poured the years on him.

It flashed through Stanton's mind then that whatever Arden had seen, it had probably unhinged his brain



forever. It came over Stanton, too, that the dog was afraid that Arden would talk.

For one magical moment Stanton thought of rationalizing with the dog! Of *talking* to her as to a sentient human being! Of explaining to her that Arden was mad, that no one would believe him now!

The spell passed, but it left Stanton shivering, fearful for his own sanity.

Arden began to back away again, the dog taking each measured step with him. Stanton suddenly remembered that Arden had called her a killer dog, a cannibal. This relentless pursuit could end in only one way, then—if it was allowed to continue. Stanton knew what he should do to put an end to the grim game. He raised the gun and took careful aim at the back of the giant dog's head.

But still they circled, and still Stanton refrained from squeezing the trigger. Now the dog was facing him, so that he aimed between her eyes. A perfect shot, he couldn't miss—but he did not pull the trigger.

Oddly, the dog still paid him no heed.

What evil influence was at work in him, Stanton could never afterward fathom. But this was the moment, it came over him, that he hated Arden with more than fleeting anger. It came over him now that his friend had been the curse of his existence.

Reason did not attempt to explain this false association of thought. Instead, little mystic maggots breathed blasphemies in Stanton's brain. Suddenly, the image of Deidre flashed unbidden into his brain, then flashed out again, pursued by thoughts more violent.

"The dogs, the dogs, he prefers the dogs to you." "The mine, the mine, you can have the mine for yourself, you fool, you can have the mine for yourself."

What? But how?

"There are your mutually beneficial wills."

Say no more, Voice! Go!

But Stanton did not pull the trigger. There were, in fact, those mutually beneficial partnership wills, each

leaving his estate to the other. And Arden was quite mad; what good was all that money to a madman?

It was a cannibal dog. It would not be long now. Stanton couldn't turn his flushed, fascinated gaze away.

He was watching, tensely alert, when Tom Arden made the fatal gesture. The dog fancier brought his club down on the big dog's head. Rather, he brought the club down where the big dog's head had been.

For with a lightning move of a tawny paw, the brute knocked the club aside and leaped for the doomed man's throat. Dumb no longer, the she-dog was snarling now in a way to freeze the blood. But what was even more revolting, Tom Arden was snarling, too! Making depraved, brutal, *animal* sounds!

Fierce as was the great dog in her ferment of flaming fever, Arden in his madness was a momentary match for her. Stanton could see this. He could see that if he shot the dog now—even now—But he did not shoot. There was the will—there was the mine—there were riches in store for him! If—if he did not—pull that trigger—Then the dog's saber teeth raked the throat of Thomas Arden and it was—*too late!*

Arden reared himself erect and with a mighty effort threw the dog off. He stared at his friend, and his accusing eyes were wholly sane. He started to talk but no words came. Only blood gushed forth from his mutilated throat in a thin dark geyser. He reeled then, sprang for the door in a last desperate effort, but the dog leaped on him from behind.

She brought him down. She, a cannibal dog—

STANTON shook his head violently, as if that could dispel the horrible sight his bulging eyes were seeing. Arden's last look, beseeching, bewildered, unbelieving—*accusing*—seemed to have shocked some semblance of sense into Stanton's benumbed brain. He crashed out of his trance with almost physical force.

"What have I done!" he shouted. "God forgive me! Tom! Forgive me!"

And then he shot. The great dog



bounded up with a cry that was startlingly human — a high, womanish screech of terror and mortal agony. Stanton fired again and caught her in mid-air, blasting half her head away. She dropped without another outcry. A lake of blood quickly formed around her.

Another moment Stanton stared at the two dead bodies. Then he threw the gun away. He covered his face with his hands and wept for the friend of his youth. He would have given up the silver mine in that moment if that could undo this great wrong he had committed. He would have given all he possessed, all he was ever likely to possess, in this fit of remorse that gripped him.

In his heart, in his mind, in his very soul he knew he was a murderer, with the brand of Cain forever upon him—nay, upon him *twice!*

In the end Stanton dragged his friend out and called the police, who in turn sent for the coroner. No guilt attached to Stanton, in the eyes of the law. A vicious dog had attacked his friend, and Stanton had arrived too late to save him.

Only Stanton himself knew better. His remorse, genuine enough though it was, did not take a morbid turn. What was the use? Confession could not bring Tom Arden back again. It could serve no special purpose, as far as he could see.

On the other hand, there was Tom Arden's will; there was the mine, there were riches. Arden had ignored some distant relatives in his will—in favor of his best friend. Stanton promised himself to attend to them handsomely. It was one way of stifling the terrible beating of his heart.

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## CHAPTER III

### *Terror Incarnate*

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**L**ESS than a year after the acquisition of the rich mining property, Stanton found himself becoming too wealthy to be annoyed with the

investment business he had built up with his late friend. In his heart he knew that this was only partly true. What troubled him more was the memory of Tom Arden; the way he had looked when the madness had left him just as the grim reaper snapped close his jaws.

Nor could Stanton erase from his inward eye the picture of that monstrous cannibal dog, ripping, tearing at the flesh of his dearest friend—

Everything about his office reminded Stanton constantly of Tom Arden. Even after he had removed the sporting prints from the walls, the animal-head desk set and similar evidences of Arden's late avocations, old-time clients, in the course of conversation, often brought back vivid visions of his friend and the tragic manner of his passing.

On occasion even, when Stanton was in a particularly responsive mood, he felt that the very walls whispered ghostly echoes of old conversations. The whole thing, to say the least, was very disconcerting. Stanton was having trouble enough with his conscience without these constant reminders. He fervently wished the dead to stay buried.

Stanton soon discovered what any of his retired clients could have told him—that when he liquidated the investment business, time became a terror to annihilate. With nothing to crowd his waking moments but his own dread thoughts, he was more than ever in the grip of despondency.

It was no longer necessary to spend hours at an office. It was no longer necessary to entertain in the evening. Nor was Stanton's company so sought after with his finger off the stock market's pulse. People had nothing to gain from him, and for the doubtful pleasure of his company alone he was no great bargain.

For he had become moody, unresponsive to dinner stories or the ribald jests of club affairs. Behind his back he was called a wet blanket by people who formerly had liked him around. He was losing his grip, they said; he was growing old before his time.

So Stanton sought to kill time with



travel. Here again he could have learned in a moment of talk with an experienced traveler what it took him six months of trotting around the United States and South America to find out—that one place on earth was much like another. People loved and fought, died or had children. Life, somehow, had a changeless habit about it.

It was six months of strange sights that puzzled and annoyed and finally wore Stanton out, for he was no adventurer at heart. Wherever he went, he felt like a stranger, instead of experiencing the pleasurable thrills of excitement common to his voluble fellow-travelers.

Strange foods upset him, train rides tired him, boats made him sick just to think about. So it was with a glad heart that he ended his distasteful wanderings and bought a boat ticket for home.

Stanton remained in his stateroom most of the way to New York, having discovered earlier that for him, rest and quiet was one way to avoid the distressingly nauseous qualms of seasickness. That gave him more time than ever to think.

But the change of air and scene must have done him some good after all, for his thoughts were not purely constructive. His conscience bothered him less than at any time since the unfortunate occurrence at the kennels. It was only when he looked in the mirror and saw himself at only forty-five a rapidly aging man, that he felt any concern whatever, any of the old tremors of remorse.

He knew that it was not time that had put the gray in his hair, or the new lines in his face, or had sunk the tired eyes so far back in his head, or given such a decided stoop to the once enviably smart lines of his shoulders.

A certain fierce pride Stanton retained still, and this came to his rescue when his despair was at its most desolate. But on the trip from South America, on the way back home, his spirits soared. Definitely he had made up his mind about the future. He did not like travel. Very well—he would quit traveling, he would settle down!

Since he had found no place that suited his rather simple tastes more than the city of his first choice, why, back to the city he would go. Of one thing he felt certain. This time he would live a little; this time he would entertain; this time he would laugh and be merry.

Stanton remembered an old saying he had not heard since boyhood about laughter being good for the soul. His soul needed something like that. All at once he commenced laughing. He repeated the saying over and over to himself as that most religious of humans, the Tibetan, endlessly repeats his "*Om Mani Padme Hum*" on the swiftly spinning prayer wheel.

Stanton came out of his cabin on the last day of the voyage as a bear comes out of his cave in the spring—lean, hungry and exceedingly active. He dropped down on the other passengers like a pleasant, prankful angel from heaven. They'd all been bored stiff with each other's company by now and Stanton was a new diversion. Also a quite happy one.

For the millionth time he repeated that thing about laughter and the soul—to himself, of course, for he did not fancy being considered odd—and fell in with his shipmates' games and their trifling shipboard pleasures. The weather was fine, the boat was steady, and Stanton enjoyed himself hugely. Decidedly, company was the thing to dispel unpleasant thoughts. Company and, of course, laughter.

When people asked him where he had been all their lives, or some other insipid cliché so peculiar to shipboard acquaintances, Stanton replied with a knowing wink that implied he was a devil of a fellow and had been drunk, if the questioner was young and peppy.

To the older heads or the pious-appearing he only smiled, and talked vaguely about the market. In general he gave the impression that he was a man of affairs, much too busy to spend all his time at play. But able to play, by golly! with the liveliest, when he wanted to.

So in the end his wanderings served their purpose. For Stanton they ushered in a new life. The pangs of con-



science ceased to trouble him. He went to shows and operas and blatantly pretentious motion picture premiers. His big new house in the city became the meeting place for the conceited, sprightly "smart set," the type of people who consider the evening a failure if nothing is broken or no one is injured in tipsy combat.

Stanton had gone, it will be observed, to the opposite extreme. In his heart he did not like it. His orderly, prosaic nature shrank from this sham, this pretense of happiness. Still, it was better so, he decided. He could well afford the expense, and the almost constant clamor kept his mind off—other things.

It was now two years since the tragic demise of Tom Arden and the shooting of the cannibal dog. If in that time Stanton had aged ten years, he had prospered accordingly. If he was not really happy, he was at least moderately content. Financially, he had not a worry in the world. The silver mine was everything he had expected it to be. He was practically rolling in wealth from it. No affairs of moment took his time, and he was pathetically trying to cram his days full of fun.

His health had improved a great deal since his return from the trip and his adoption of this new life. But he would never feel as sound as he had prior to that ugly affair at the kennels.

At least the *thoughts* had ceased to trouble him, and that was the paramount thing.

Only one detail was necessary, Stanton felt, to wipe the whole depressing business from his mind forever. That was to get rid of the place in the country. Tom Arden's place. The place of the terrible deed. To that end, Stanton had some time since hired a real estate agent, and today the agent had made an appointment to meet a prospective customer on the grounds.

Stanton did not like the idea of going back, but he felt he could stand it for the few hours necessary to show the place and point out its many advantages. The dogs, valuable though he knew them to be, Stanton had

turned over to the S.P.C.A. the day his friend had died.

**H**E supposed they had found homes for the brutes, though he didn't know and he didn't care. Just the same, he meant not to approach the kennels. He would let the agent show that part himself.

Stanton tried to keep wholesome thoughts in his mind as he pulled up to the house in his big new roadster and hailed the real estate man who had already arrived with the customer. There were introductions and general handshaking, and Stanton was thankful when the agent produced a flask that went the rounds. He felt he needed a drink. It was after all a nippy day.

"I've been showing Mr. Dinsmore the house," said the agent, "and he's well pleased with it. I explained the price is low simply because you want to be rid of it on account of—er—the sad memory attached to it. I was just going to show Mr. Dinsmore the kennels when you arrived. Now we can all go together."

Stanton felt a funny clutching at his heart.

"If you don't mind," he begged, "I'll wait in the house. You show it to him."

"I understand," the agent said sagely. "You bet, Mr. Stanton. Well, it's this way, Mr. Dinsmore. Right down this runway here—"

Stanton went inside the house and sat down, because for no accountable reason he was beginning to feel jittery in such close proximity to the kennels. For the fortieth time he told himself that he had done a wise thing in coming back—and he knew that he was wrong.

He kept telling himself that the only way to definitely kill the distasteful memory that hovered like an evil shade was to come and look and conquer it. This was a house in the country. It had grounds and kennels. What harm was there in that?

True, something terrible had happened here. But that was long ago. Two years? It seemed like ten!

Stanton felt suddenly stronger, braver than at any time since the



death of Tom Arden. Two years had passed and nothing had happened. In sudden panic, he realized that all this time he had been *expecting* something to happen! Well, what? Sweat broke out on his face.

Then he gave a short laugh. He was being silly, emotional. He shouldn't have accepted that drink. Nothing *had* happened, and nothing ever would! To prove his faith in this mental assertion, he decided to get up and walk over to the kennels. He would even look at the cage—the cage!—without flinching. What was done, was done.

Arden would not have been better off in a madhouse, would he?

Filled with fresh strength Stanton started to get up—and found that he couldn't. His feet seemed pinned to the floor by some heavy object that was not manifest, yet held him down, though with oddly incorporeal force.

He sweated anew in dreadful bewilderment. Something, something that was not there, was holding him down as if it were! It made no sense at all. Stanton forced out a quavering laugh and tried again. But he couldn't get up.

The mystic panic within him that had been lurking close to the surface ever since he arrived, now sprang to tempestuous life. With his eyes bulging from his head, his rich clothes damply sweat-soaked, Stanton presented a picture of fear incarnate.

He grabbed the table and heaved erect with a tremendous jerk and leap. The invisible thing that held him lost its grip. Stanton went catapulting backward, lost his balance and then crashed to the floor.

Before he could rise again it was on him. He could see nothing, but he could *feel* a soft weight upon him. He could feel it moving, squirming. It was moving upward on his body. *It was reaching for his throat!*

With this dreadful realization Stanton somehow found fresh strength. His hands flew up in an instinctive gesture of self-protection—and encountered shaggy fur! The thing was an impalpable impression to the eye—yet real enough to the touch! Stanton screamed once in incredible terror. Then he fainted dead away.

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## CHAPTER IV

### *Desertion*

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**I**T WAS a fortunate thing that the real estate man and his customer were through with their inspection tour and were on the way back to the house. They heard the scream and ran inside.

Stanton lay sprawled in a disheveled, inanimate heap. He was uninjured, but quite insensible. Nor could they get a coherent word out of him for some time after they brought him to.

With the first glimmer of sanity in his mind, Stanton made up an excuse about a weak heart. He was still quite shaky when he finally got in his car and drove off. He never did find out if Dinsmore liked the estate, or whether he bought it or not. Stanton would never come near the place again.

His encounter with the shaggy specter changed his mode of living entirely. The first thing he did when he reached home was to throw outdoors a gang of startled parasites who had been sponging on him for months. He denied entrance to all comers. Of his large staff of servants, he retained only a cook and a maid. With derelict egocentrics no longer welcome, Stanton could manage well enough.

He sat down to a quiet dinner that night—the first quiet dinner he had had since his homecoming. He was the lone diner at the table. He was good and hungry now, having forgot to eat in the day's terror.

The dinner started with a mixed seafood cocktail that Stanton knew from experience was a remarkable appetizer. He raised the little fork—and stopped with the delectable food halfway to his mouth. An icy blast of air had all at once usurped the cheery warmth of the room. It surprised and puzzled him. The doors were closed, no breeze stirred the heavy drapes and the thin veil of curtain at the slightly open windows.

Stanton lifted the fork again, and



again he stopped without swallowing a bite. He froze in that position like a statue. His body grew cold as fear; he felt his whole scalp crawl. *There was something at his feet!*

It seemed to Stanton that his heart stopped beating. He couldn't move, he couldn't scream, he could only sit and stare like a somnambulist. Then the thing at his feet began to rub his legs like a cat—or a dog.

He fought to overcome his revulsion, even the full frenzy of his terror. Perhaps the thing was trying to be friendly, he thought—and prayed that it was so. He reached down, felt fur—and stroked it. And then the beast began to pant—but not to snarl!

Stanton felt his blood begin to flow again. He was right, the animal was friendly. He petted it again and whispered to it, as one would to a friendly dog. He grew bolder, drained strength from his vast fear. He began to eat again, as if the thing was real, as if it was a live dog at his feet, a pet—a household pet.

But before the food reached his mouth, Stanton felt the thing stiffen, heard a low growl that could only be interpreted as a warning. Again he paused. He summoned every last vestige of flagged-out courage and tried to think calmly. He heard the growl again, came to a quick decision. He decided that the beast was hungry. Nervously he set the food by his feet, under the table.

When he picked up the dish, it had been licked clean.

The same thing happened with the soup. The same thing happened with the salad. The same thing happened with his steak and the dessert as well. The maid, who had been pressed into service at table, looked at him oddly when she picked up each plate, licked uncommonly clean.

Stanton was permitted to drink his coffee unmolested. He was allowed an after-dinner cigarette and felt thankful for that small favor. Then he got up from the table, hungrier than when he had sat down, and so thoroughly frightened that he shook.

He finally gained enough courage to move about. Nothing happened. He did not hear the beast or feel it about.

It had been hungry, he decided; nothing more. He waited till the maid and the cook were through with their work and had gone off to bed.

Then Stanton went into the kitchen and raided the big refrigerator. He piled his plate with cold meat and took it to the kitchen table. Half famished by now — more from the moral effect upon his mind than from actual hunger—he dived in with a will. But with the first mouthful poised to eat, he heard the low growl again!

STANTON stopped with a resigned sigh. He put the food on the floor and waited, but nothing happened. Apparently the beast was not hungry, but still would not allow him to eat. Shaking, he went to bed hungry, the hunger gnawing at his mind as well as his vitals.

He slept fitfully, for he tried to keep awake. He was afraid of what might happen to him in the night. He remembered what the brute had done to its litter. He remembered what it had done to his friend. Then he remembered what *he* had done to *it*! And the beast was a cannibal dog—

Stanton was afraid, too, that he might dream again. It added greatly to his discomfort, for he remembered vividly what that dream had been like. He knew now that he had never actually forgot it, had subconsciously dreaded its return. He cursed himself thoroughly for having gone back to the place in the country, the place where Tom Arden and the dog—had died. Why—the dog had been waiting for him to come back!

And Arden, what about Tom Arden? A thought occurred to Stanton now that lifted him out of his bed. Suppose *this* was Arden! Suppose his partner had come back in this guise! Arden had been quite under the spell of the giant dog just prior to the end. He had fought with it, snarling like a dog, not shouting, not screaming, not evincing any other human traits in the throes of the death struggle.

The hair-raising thought was an effective antidote for sleep. It was the end of Stanton's rest for the night.



He sneaked down very early in the morning, before the cook was up, bent on stealing his breakfast. It was in his mind to foil the beast. Never for a moment did he think it was gone to stay.

Stanton made no sound as he stealthily took things out of the well-stocked pantry and put them on a plate. He didn't sit down with it. He stood holding it in his hand, listening.

He heard nothing. He permitted himself no optimistic smile but slowly, very slowly, he raised some food to his mouth; he was very hungry. Slowly, very slowly—and now he heard the growl!

Stanton quickly crammed some food in his mouth and set the plate down. Then he hurried from the kitchen, not waiting to see what would happen to the rest he had not been allowed to swallow.

When the cook came out with a steaming breakfast, she had a complaint to make,

"It's like as if there was a dog in the house, Mr. Stanton," she said with a little shiver. "There's plates in the pantry as is wiped clean. And someone's been stealin' food."

Stanton blamed it all on mice and told her not to bother her head.

"Mice?" the cook indignantly said. "In my kitchen?"

She stopped suddenly and looked closer at her master. Perhaps she was thinking of the clean-licked dishes the maid had brought back from the table the night before, because she gave a quick start and a little gasp, caught at her ample bosom and backed out of the room. Her eyes were wide with something that could be interpreted as horror. She did not come back.

Stanton's mouth was drooling; he was starved. He went slowly about his breakfast. He felt that the beast had been gorging itself, would allow him to have breakfast in peace. In this, he was very extravagantly mistaken. The brute did not even permit him his coffee.

That one mouthful of food he had snatched earlier constituted the extent of his breakfast. It constituted,

in fact, the extent of his luncheon, also. And of his supper as well. The beast was starving him to death!

In the evening, a little after the supper dishes had been cleared away, the maid came into the living room, where Stanton was moodily staring into the big warming fire on the hearth. She was dressed in her Sunday best, had a big battered suitcase in one hand and an assortment of paper-wrapped bundles in the other.

**W**ITHOUT preamble the maid spoke in a frightened sort of whisper.

"I'm leaving, sir. If you want to pay me, it's all right. But I'm leaving, sir—anyways."

Stanton remonstrated with her. "Aren't you happy here? Don't I pay you enough? You said yourself you liked it here!"

He knew very well what was wrong. It was those dishes, licked clean, that she had been taking back from the table since the night before. It was what the cook had said about stolen food, obviously eaten off plates licked clean, "like as if there was a dog in the house."

Stanton was afraid the cook would leave him, too, and then he would be alone in the house. Alone—with the panting beast!

The maid wouldn't answer his questions. She was vague in her reasons for leaving.

"I couldn't just say, sir, really. It's like as if you'd changed, sir. Since yesterday, sir."

"You mean in my appearance, Hilda? You mean my face has changed?" he demanded frantically.

But he could not get the maid to enlarge on her statement.

"She meant the dishes," he said to himself. "She thinks I licked them clean— Good God, she *must* mean that! She cannot mean I'm—*changing*—"

"At least Ella isn't going to leave me," he said with a sigh as he paid the maid. "At least Ella hasn't got such silly notions in her head."

"Excuse me, sir," said the maid, backing away. "Ella left an hour ago."



## CHAPTER V

*The Inexorable Way*

THE fire was dying down. It was getting late. Stanton was ravenously hungry. He was worried enough about his stomach, but he had another concern, one perhaps even more important—he wondered if he was altering in appearance, if he was beginning to resemble a *beast*!

He could not bring himself to look in a mirror. He felt of his face. It seemed all right, except that he had neglected to shave. Shaving would of course necessitate looking in a mirror. This he could not bring himself to do.

Stanton was quietly thinking, when the simplest plan came to him: he would go out. He would leave the beast at home and go out to dine. How simple! Were not the most important inventions of man and science derived from simple thoughts? Simple things?

He felt almost gay as he slipped into a coat and put on a hat. The panting beast would not dare make its presence manifest outside, among strangers. More especially, where there were bright lights and music, where there were merry voices and wine. Ghosts seemed to have a working agreement in regard to the proper conditions; a Ghosts' Union, he thought with a grin.

Stanton wanted to say a few jolly words out loud, in case the brute could understand him, but thought better of it. Thus far, except for the initial attack in Tom Arden's house, it showed no killer instinct. Wickedness, yes; but no attempt at deliberate murder. There would be no point in antagonizing it now.

Stanton went through the rooms, walked down the short passage into the long hall, down the hall to the foyer. The foyer was not large; it was not more than half a dozen steps to the front door. The front door and freedom—for Stanton had no intention of ever coming back again.

It was only half a dozen steps. But he couldn't make it. The way was barred. It was barred by the panting beast.

Stanton stood there like a stricken man, seeing nothing, feeling nothing, listening to the even, measured panting. He was a prisoner in his own home, doomed to slow starvation. The realization struck him with something akin to physical force. He sobbed hoarsely, hysterically, and crumpled to the richly carpeted floor, half unconscious. . . .

He came to his full senses with a moist breath in his face — a moist breathing, a *panting*! His paroxysm of terror had spent itself. He was like a man doomed to die by the last court of appeal; he was resigned. He knew that the brute was bringing him awake in order to torture him, but still he got up.

Stanton went to bed presently; to bed, but not to sleep. Waking visions of the dream kept recurring to him. That was bad enough. But he was afraid it would visit him in his sleep. And that would have disastrous results, he knew. So he kept away as much as he could, dozing and nodding and waking himself up.

The next day was even a worse one for him. It was an unholy terror. Thinking to foil the beast, perhaps starve it first, he made himself no breakfast. Rather, he made no pretense of getting breakfast. He lit a roaring fire and mentally let the brute go to hell.

HE WAS not accustomed to hunger: he could never remember having missed a meal in his life before. For that reason he took the lack of the food hard. He was weak, light in the head. He knew he wasn't dying, he knew actual starvation was a long drawn out process.

It worried him; he thought of killing himself. He was doomed, anyway, and death was preferable to torture. He didn't commit suicide, felt that he hadn't the courage — yet. But the thought kept recurring.

It was going on noon, and Stanton hadn't stirred from his place by the fire. It was at least a reasonably com-



fortable way to die. Several times he had thought of sneaking into the pantry for something to eat, but each time he rejected the idea. He was weak now; it would take an effort to get up. And what was the use? This way, he at least had the satisfaction of knowing that the beast went hungry, too.

**B**UT apparently the brute had other ideas. Stanton was in a half doze when he felt a wet nuzzling in his hand. He came wide awake at once. Something gripped the hem of his dressing gown and jerked, gently.

He thought to himself: "It's hungry, but the hell with it. Let it starve, too."

The tugging grew less gentle, became quite fierce. Ordinarily Stanton would have been frightened out of his wits long before, but he was weak now, giddy. Besides, he was steeped in self-pity.

He paid no attention to the tugging, which was now violent. Then the tugging stopped, and he relaxed in his big wing chair. But not for long. He felt something snuggle up close to his chest. He felt warm breath on his face, on his throat—then strong teeth gripped his throat—gently.

It was evidently a warning, and Stanton took it in the proper spirit. He fairly bounded out of the chair, practically flew into the kitchen. His weakness was forgot altogether, buried in the memory of Tom Arden's being ripped apart by a savage, man-eating dog.

Stanton heaped plates with food and set them on the floor. He heard low warning growls then, and quickly went away.

He was by now quite used to having the thing around. It had almost ceased to worry him. The dream, too, was becoming less fearful. Besides, he was tired out by the ordeal. He did not even try to keep awake that night; he needed the rest. His sleep was the dreamless semi-coma of exhaustion. That is, of course, until the dream came back.

There were certain salient changes in the visitation, however. Tom Arden did not appear in it, the dogs did

not appear in it, there were no yowling or other jarring discord. There was only the giant she-dog, and she was singing.

And as she sang, she changed, as before. She became Deidre. She became a woman of such dazzling beauty that even in his sleep, Stanton shut his eyes tighter. It hurt him to look at her, made his sleeping brain reel.

The interior eye of his mind feasted upon Deidre's bizarre loveliness—and desired her greatly. The inward ear reveled in her singing, which entranced the inner man entirely. The stillness of the dream was shattered by chimerical chimes.

Siren strains swelled, filled the room with music as with a vast organ. It burst upon the sleeping brain, tingled, stung, thrilled with pale phantasmal fingers. It was not music so much as a song incarnate, a living, breathing thing of seraphic fabrication, sired by delirium, mothered by deranged fancy.

The scene, the stage, the entire setting, at first provokingly vague, became now full-blown. It was all as familiar to Stanton as his own house. With a miserable tremor of his sleeping body, he realized that it was his own house, was in fact this very bed-chamber!

In the dream he saw his sleeping self in rigid repose on the bed. His body appeared to him more like a lifeless corpse, lying in state before the last rites, than as the inert frame of breathing flesh. He struggled, and though he knew even in his sleep that he must be moving a little, in the dream his body remained perfectly rigid.

And now *she*, Deidre, the *living* song, was coming toward the sleeping self of the dream. There was no mistaking the wanton passion in each slow, sinuous step. There was no mistaking the longing in this serpentine torment of perfection.

To the sleeping man, it was exquisitely painful torture. But he did not give in. He knew instinctively what the penalty must be. With pangs like shot arrows, he recalled the fate of the she-dog's whelp. Whelp? He writhed and fought in an agony of



nightmarish panic. He knew if he could awaken, he could dispel this anomalous illusion.

If not—Stanton pictured the occult end of his sleeping self, and with it of course his actual soul. He should forever afterward wander in a half-world, a weird changeling, a thing no more dead than alive—

**W**ITH the diabolically exquisite creature not ten steps away from him, Stanton forced himself awake. He sat up in bed, nerves taut as a bowstring, muscles so tense that they hurt. He held his sweat-soaked head in his hands and moaned weakly, for the monstrously marvelous song still dinned in his ears, still filled the room with unholy gladness. He lifted his head, and stared in incredulous horror.

She was still there, Deidre, still singing, still slowly coming toward him. Waking, then, had failed to dispel the illusion. It was no illusion!

Stanton knew in that moment that he was doomed, for instinct told him it was this horror which Tom Arden had seen, this vision of unearthly terror which had unhinged his mind and finally killed him.

She was no more than three feet away when Stanton broke the banshee bonds of Titan terror that held him. Rather, his terror soared till it owned his body and took possession of his soul. He let out a shriek like a mindless madman, leaped out of bed.

"Deidre!" he shrieked. "Forgive me, Deidre, forgive me!"

But the dream-woman, music still pouring from her throat, advanced relentlessly with slow, funereal tread.

Stanton backed into a corner in twisted terror.

"Deidre!" he screamed. "Forgive Arden! Forgive me!"

She opened her arms to him then. And with the first touch of her phantasmal fingers, Stanton crumpled like a limp rag. . . .

They found him there three days later, when a tradesman became suspicious at the continued quiet.

"It's odd," said the man, in recounting the tale. "The coroner said that he died from a heart attack, brought on by malnutrition. He was starving himself—with enough grub in the house to feed the whole Chinese army!"

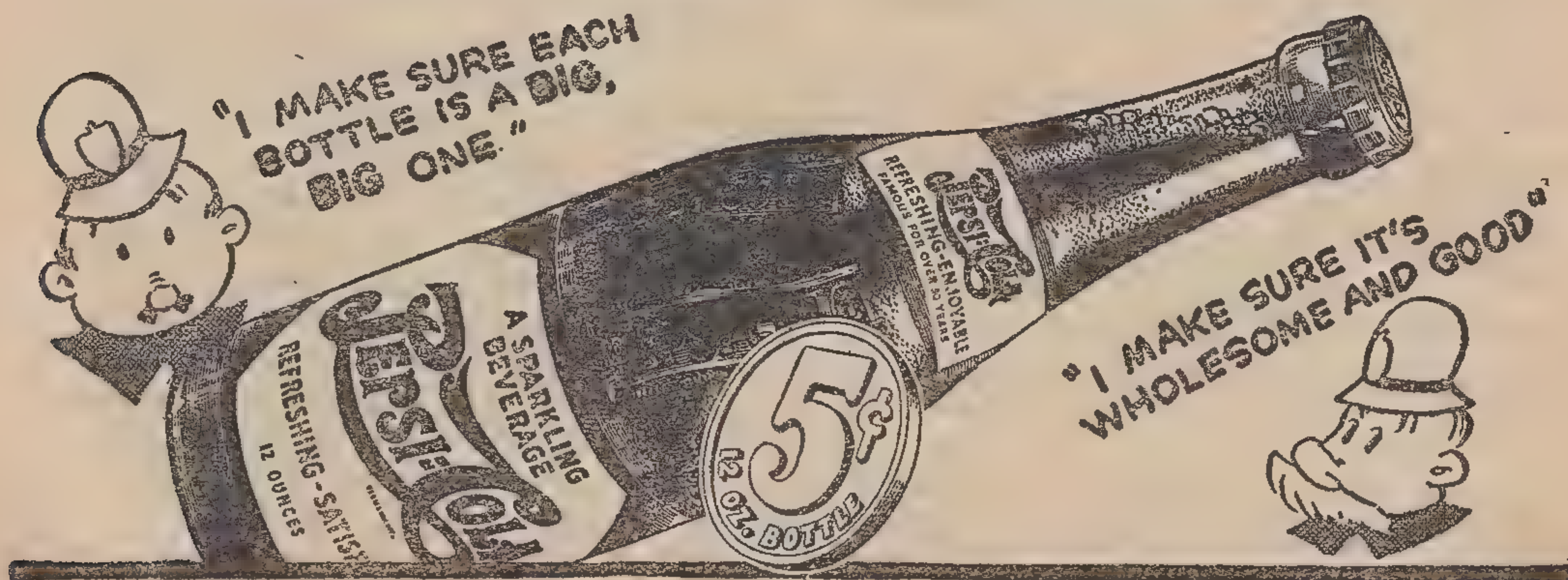
"And there was kind of a smell, like a dog in the house. That's funny. Stanton didn't like dogs."

NEXT ISSUE

## THE MURDERER WITHIN

*The Story of a Fiendish Apparition*

By NORMAN A. DANIELS





# The Sailor Quits the Sea

By EARLE DOW

*Author of "Death Docks at Dawn," "Pearls of Kamboli," etc.*



Everywhere he saw  
her before him

*George Farrell Feared His  
Nemesis—but Couldn't Keep His  
Feet from Leading Him to It!*

**S**O, Mike Geary quit the sea, did he? Well, well, well! I never would have expected Mike Geary to settle where there wouldn't be at least two docks, six ships and half an ocean in plain sight.

What? That's just what he wanted to get away from? You're nuts! You're crazy! Mike Geary loved the

sea! Mike Geary was born on a poop deck, was suckled by a mermaid and cut his teeth on an anchor chain. And you tell me he's gone and bought two acres of rocks and sage brush a thousand miles inland, and he never again wants to set eyes on anything that looks like a spar. You're expecting me to believe he never again wants to



hear anything that sounds like the scream of a gull? Or the creak of a rolling cabin, or never again wants to feel water that isn't in pipes?

And it's all on account of George Farrell, eh? Well, that explains it. What'd he say about George? Yeah? *Hmmm*. Saw him all over the ship, huh? Saw him standing watch on the fo'c'sle, swabbing down the decks, lounging on the hatch covers, eh? Till he felt like the whole damn sea was haunted as well as him, and had to get away from it if he didn't want to go balmy!

Well, can you blame him after what happened to George? You don't know what happened to George? Didn't Mike tell you? Huh! Still, I guess I can understand that, too. He just couldn't bear to talk about it.

Do I know what happened to George? Of course I know. I was there. Sure I'll tell you about it. As a matter of fact, it might do me good to get it out of my system and off of my mind. Sometimes I have a sneaking suspicion that I think about it too much. And it's the sort of thing you don't want to sit and brood about, if you know what's good for you.

To tell the truth, that's the reason I left Panama. I'd been there long enough, anyway. I'd been there six years that last night George Farrell came ashore, sort of a silent partner in Bill Blue's dancehall.

**B**ILL and I didn't have the only dancehall in Colon by a long shot, but we had the only one of its kind. It wasn't exactly exclusive, but we had our own little set, our own clientele, you might say, and we were not overworked by transients. When the ships docked at Cristobal, of course, everybody who wanted a drink came on over to Colon. But the officers went to the ritzy places, and the sailors went to the *cantinas*. We didn't see much of them. Once in a while fellows like George Farrell dropped in, and they usually became regular customers.

George was a regular. He'd been coming to the dancehall once every year for five years. As sure as death, we knew that when his ship, the

*Cobra King*, made her annual call at Cristobal, George would be over. That was how we knew he'd be there that night. Everybody in the place was looking for him, just waiting for him to stick his face in that door.

If we'd had the least shred of an idea that anything so downright ghastly was going to transpire, we'd have cleaned every customer out of the dancehall, doused the lights and locked the doors, and every manjack of us would have laid low in the handiest banana grove till the *Cobra King* had cleared port. But how could we know? How could we have the faintest warning?

Yet, in a way, I think I did have a kind of warning. I remember thinking that it was a night for something screwy to happen, a creepy sort of night.

The *Cobra King* had docked at Cristobal that afternoon, and I was out on the little narrow balcony, hanging around outside just waiting for George to show up. I was nervous, too, for some reason. I kept pacing the balcony, and looking over my shoulder, and listening for every sound.

The night was young, as a new-filled grave is young, and the moon was gibbous as a noseless leper. The raucous revelry along the *Calle Quatro* was laden with the horrible gibberings of the damned souls of hell and the thirteen creaking steps which led to the termite-gutted second story of Bill Blue's dancehall repeated in thirteen rasping screeches the sound of gibbet-ropes swinging a new-made corpse.

That's the kind of night it was. And that's the kind of stuff I was thinking, when I caught sight of George Farrell headed that way, and ducked inside.

I slipped across the room to a spot opposite the entrance, and told Bill that George was on his way in, and Bill grinned, but he didn't say anything. I stood there leaning against the wall, waiting, watching the door, and trying not to look as if I was watching.

Then the door swung open and Farrell came in. He paused just inside



for a few seconds, darting a look around the room—and I knew what he was looking for, or at least what I hoped he was looking for. His cold blue eyes, accustomed to tracing smoke smudges on distant horizons, or spotting ship traps of uncharted lurking reefs by the portent of faint necklaces of breaking waves, blinked at the simultaneous assault of tropical tobacco smoke, of furtive male scrutiny and ogling female glances, and the blatant tin-can music of the untrained Negro band.

He couldn't come through the doorway without bending, and when he straightened up he'd struck the back of his head against the top of the doorframe. He stood there blinking, and rubbing the bump on his scalp for nearly a minute.

Then he stepped to one side and leaned lightly against the unpainted wall boards. I knew he wasn't exerting any pressure, because if he'd leaned hard with that big hulk of his, he'd have ripped the wall from its nails and thrown himself downstairs into the black maw of the unlighted alley which ran alongside the building.

**I** GRINNED to myself, because I had an idea what was in his mind, and it should have occurred to him that it would be foolish to try, even for the sixtieth part of a minute, to hide himself or conceal his identity by hugging the corners of Bill Blue's dancehall. He must already have made out through the stagnant smoke screen several familiar faces, and he had to realize that the owners of those faces had recognized him.

Farrell had been around. Nobody had to tell him that the type of clientele frequenting a dancehall like ours, from the cool and wary fellows behind the bar to the bold-eyed dancing *senoritas*, possessed memories that were vivid, calculating, and long. I wasn't the only one who was watching him. Practically everyone in the hall was keeping a weather eye peeled to see what he was going to do.

And they all knew as well as I did that George Farrell was standing there, almost afraid to take another

step, remembering the riotous evening he had spent there a year ago to the dot. He probably was remembering the evenings he had spent there two years ago, three, four, five.

Suddenly he swung his head and looked across the hall. He looked straight at me, and I tell you I could read on his face exactly what he was thinking. In spite of the fetid closeness of the dancehall and the enervating tropical heat from outside, a dagger of terror was zigzagging through Farrell from the back of his neck down to the base of his spine. He was chilled as if he stood in ice water up to his ears. Even from where I stood I could see the cold sweat break on his forehead.

I had an idea it had suddenly occurred to him to wonder what they did to you under the Panama law. Did they hang a man for murder, or did they own an electric chair over in Panama City, at the other end of the Canal? Or did they have a gas chamber? He wouldn't know. The hall might have reminded him of a gas chamber, with its stagnant and nauseating pool of cigarette smoke.

And then he saw—her. Three people, who had been concealing a table from his vision, moved aside. And he saw her there, sitting at the table, staring straight at him. *La Golondrina*. The Swallow.

If she had any other name, I had never heard it. When she came there to the hall to sing, that was the name she gave. Nobody ever called her anything else—just that, The Swallow. I guess swallows don't sing. I never heard one. But if a swallow did sing, I think it would sing like she did.

She sort of looked like a swallow, little, and bright and quick. Always dressed in something that shimmered, with glittering jewels stuck here and there, and her black eyes shining as if they were polished. By tears, maybe. That night she looked the same to him as she had always looked.

Instantly, his common sense, the kind of sense he could use when his feet were spread wide on the fo'c'sle planks after he was a safe distance out to sea, warned him that his imagination was running amuck. She



wasn't there. She couldn't be there. He shut his eyes, kept them squeezed tight for a long minute, opened them, and looked again.

She was there! She smiled at him. He started violently, reeled back, and flung out a groping hand to grip the door casing and steady himself. But he kept looking at her. He couldn't take his gaze off her. If she wasn't really there she'd have to fade away in a minute. Only she didn't fade away. She raised a hand and beckoned to him.

**I** COULD fairly see him pull himself together, call on his sanity and exert his reason. He yanked up his head, set his brows fiercely, squared his shoulders and started forward, straight toward the table; as straight as he could walk with that rolling gait of his. And she sat waiting, her black head erect, her beautiful face pale and calm, her curved lips like two carmine hibiscus petals.

When Farrell reached the table, he stopped short and stood staring down at her sharply. By now he had completely forgotten that the stares of all the other occupants of the dance-hall were fixed upon him. He was oblivious to everything but the Swallow.

At first he didn't say a word to her. He reached an arm across the table, and with one finger he touched the back of her hand, as if to convince himself that it was really there. She turned the hand over, and gripped his, palm to palm, then drew her hand back and dropped it in her lap.

George Farrell expended a gusty breath of relief, pulled out a chair from the table, and sat down in it with a thud. He dragged a handkerchief from his pocket and mopped the sweat from his forehead.

I wasn't ten feet from that table, but he didn't see me. From that time on, he didn't see or want to see anything but the Swallow.

He leaned across the table toward her, and his voice was hoarse when he spoke to her. It even shook a little.

"For a minute I thought you was a ghost," he said. "I've been thinkin' it for a year. I've been run near out of

my mind, rememberin' what I did to you a year ago tonight just because I was so crazy jealous. Looks like the knife didn't go so deep as I thought it did. God, that sure takes a load off of my mind!"

The Swallow smiled again, the way they say the Sphinx smiles.

"I have wait for you, Georg-a. Ever since the ship is in, I have watch, and wait, for you to come."

Farrell gulped, and rubbed a hand over his face.

"Yeah. The ship's in. The old *Cobra King* is tied up at the Cristobal docks takin' on coal tonight, and I'm here for the night. And you're here. That's the important thing. You're here, when I'd have bet my life you was under six feet of dirt."

The Swallow made a reproachful grimace.

"But, Georg-a! You did not wait to see if I was killed. When I tol' you I did not love you any more, that I was in love with Francisco Santos and you must not come to see me any more, you was get so crazy mad! You just stab the knife in me and run as if all the devils were after you. *Por Dios*. I think I would wait to see whether I have kill somebody or not! It's a wonder you would come here tonight, Georg-a. I was not sure you would come. I watch and I wait. But I was not sure."

Farrell gulped again, and managed a grin, but it was a pretty ghastly grin.

"I couldn't stay away," he kind of mumbled. "You had me by the throat, dragging me here. I couldn't have stayed away from here tonight to save my soul from hell. Even though I fully expected Francisco to be stowed away in a corner, ready to take a swipe at me the minute my back was turned."

"Oh, Francisco?" The Swallow shrugged. "He does not mind. He is understand."

"Where is he?"

"Oh, around, somewhere." The Swallow dismissed Francisco with a wave of her hand. "Do not think of Francisco. Think of me."

Farrell laughed in relief.

"Good idea! I don't know anybody



else I'd rather think of. Come on, kid! All we got is one lousy night to crowd a year's fun into. Let's dance."

**T**HEY both got up from the table, and he led her out onto the dance floor. She walked a little stiffly, and he noticed that she favored her left side. That was where the knife had driven in. She caught his look on her, and smiled.

"It still hurt a little when I move too quick. But when I dance with you, Georg-a, it no make any difference."

They danced once around the hall, then at her request stopped a minute to rest. She lifted her pale face to meet his gaze, and her straight black hair glimmered and trailed off like the wake of a ship into the smoke-filled atmosphere behind her.

The carmined petals of her lips quivered briefly.

They were at the edge of the dance floor now, and I shifted a step to keep them in line. I didn't want to miss a move they made. I saw Farrell close his eyes and shudder, and I knew he was trying to shut out the awful picture of his own hand driving a knife into the Swallow's side, of the Swallow swaying and falling at his feet.

The Negro band reached the end of the number, and the cessation of the music, the sudden babble of talk, brought him back to himself with a start. He shook himself, opened his eyes—and stood there, with his feet planted wide, with his bushy blond eyebrows contracted, and stared, and stared.

And he kept on staring, while all around him the dancing *senoritas* and their satin-faced partners scattered, keeping a good distance from him as they vacated the floor. He just kept staring at blank space, where an instant before the beautiful vision of the Swallow had been.

His eyes narrowed, and he lifted his right hand, slowly, as if it weighed a ton, and swabbed at the cold perspiration that had started again on his forehead. He was probably as superstitious as most of the *Cobra King's* crew. He had been too long at sea to deride strange phenomena, to deny the

inexplicable working of Nature or the supernatural.

While he stood there, dumbfounded, like a man who didn't know which way to turn, Bill Blue glided out from the paneled-off corner he called his office, and projected his fat greasy figure into Farrell's line of vision. He threaded his way between the tables, walked right up to Farrell and looked him in the eye.

"Better you get to hell out, George," he said curtly.

"Why?" Farrell grated. "You renegade tropical lizard! Just why had I better get out?"

Bill eyed him narrowly for a second, then shrugged.

"All right, sailor. All right. Only—I thought you was drunk. I see now you ain't. But cripes! Any time I see a sailor dancin' around the floor all by hisself! . . . All right!"

Bill backed away, with a scared look on his face, as if the farther he could get from Farrell the better he'd like it. And he was muttering to himself, loud enough for everybody on the floor to hear him.

"He's crazy! That's what it is!"

Farrell doubled his hands into fists and expanded his big chest. He planted one foot down and started after Bill—then he saw her again. In a matter of seconds he had plowed through the knot of dancers, ignoring the frightened, awed glances turned toward him as the others made haste to clear out of his way. He caught her arm, and she settled against him, as though his abrupt arrival were the most natural thing in the world. And he noticed again how she walked stiffly, favoring her left side as he led her back to her table.

**H**E SAT down across from her and gave her a rather sheepish grin.

"Gawd, kid, for a minute I thought I'd gone nuts, or somethin'. I guess I musta just lost you. I'm not batty, am I? You and me *did* dance that last number, didn't we?"

He reached across the table and gripped her slender white hand. It was cool, yielding. Much too cool in that humid Panama night, and too



soft, and too clean to be clasped in the fingers that had driven that knife a year ago.

He drew back his own hand as if he'd been stung.

She didn't seem to notice it. She shook her head at him.

"What's-a matter, Georg-a? How many drink you take tonight? I think you make big *fiesta*. *Si!* You an' me dance. When dance finish, I come back to the table. You don' come with me. You stand there on the floor. You looking too funny! I think you a drunk."

"Drunk!" Farrell exploded. "I ain't had a drink tonight! Gawd, kid! For the past year I been spendin' too much time alone under the stars on the fore deck of the *Cobra King*, thinkin', lettin' the awful memory of the last time I was with you haunt me. The picture of the—of the— You know! Gawd, kid! All this time I been sailin' around the world thinkin' I'd kilt you!"

The Swallow nodded understanding.

"The ship, she go. Georg-a, he's go on the ship. How he going to know *La Golondrina* no die? How he going to know the wound heal?"

"Kid!" Farrell didn't know how loud he was talking, didn't realize that at the sudden relief he felt, the cork had popped right off of the container where he kept his emotions. "Kid, come on and let's you and me crowd it. Let's you and me crowd every second. There's only this one lousy night. Hey! Waiter! *C'ballero!*"

Dinny, the nearest waiter, a little cross-eyed guy as skinny as a bamboo pole, sidled up to the table as though he'd been anticipating Farrell's order, and slid a large glass of beer directly in front of George. Practically everybody drank beer in Bill Blue's dance-hall, and anyhow, Dinny's memory was long enough to know that beer was Farrell's annual order. Dinny started away, but Farrell glared at him and waved him back to the table.

"Hey, there! Just another sec, or I'm li'ble to brain you! What's it for you, kid?" He turned to the Swallow.

"I drink a planter's punch, Georg-a." Farrell turned back to Dinny, and

nodded. Dinny didn't budge. Farrell glared again.

"Move along, fish pole! You heard her!"

Dinny raised his eyebrows. "I hear nothing, senor."

Farrell started to get out of his chair, then sank back with a disgusted scowl.

"All right! So you're dumb, then. Go run your hollow legs to the bar and tell the 'keep to rush a planter's punch for the lady."

Dinny's face twitched and his eyes flicked over the table. His jaw dropped like an anchor.

"Senor!" he gasped. "W-wh-what lady?"

"Why, you damn' insultin' beer pusher!"

Farrell hoisted his huge body out of the chair, and started around the table after Dinny. Dinny darted back, holding up both hands, expostulating volubly.

"But, senor! I no make the insult! I ask you what lady! Look for yourself, senor! Please, senor! There is no lady!"

**F**ARRELL stopped as if somebody had slugged him over the heart. His eyes dilated, his glare turned to an appalled glazed stare. He sort of turned around by jerks, as if he didn't want to, but had to, as if something was making him turn around against his will. His gaze plunged to the table—and to the chair where the Swallow had been sitting only an instant before.

The Swallow was not there. Nothing was there. Farrell's gaze seemed to go crazy, charging around the hall, searching, looking, demanding. There was not a sign of anybody who even resembled the Swallow.

Bill Blue moved around the end of the bar and snapped at Dinny.

"Say, what the devil's goin' on down there?"

Dinny's answer was a perfect babble of incoherent protest.

"Boss, the sailor's crazy! At first, I thought he was drunk. Any time I sees a sailor roll in all by himself, and make the talk to himself as if he enjoy his own company, and make the



dance by himself, he mus' be drunk! But when he order up drinks by the pair for a lady which don't even exist!" Dinny spread his hands helplessly. "I tell you, senior, he is crazy!"

Bill snorted. "All right! All right! So he's crazy, then! Go on and tend to your business and don't go pickin' rows with the customers. If he wants to order a drink for a lady that ain't there, give it to him and let him drink it himself. Good gosh! What a life!"

Dinny backed away, and Farrell just stood there. The Negro band began to play the next number, and the dancers started to circulate on the floor, ignoring Dinny, but giving George Farrell a wide berth. Farrell didn't move. He looked as if he couldn't move. He was as white as a day-old corpse, and his face didn't have much more expression on it than you'd see on a corpse. What expression he did have was sheer terror. His eyes were like the eyes of a blind man, or a man on the verge of going mad. If it hadn't been for what he'd done to her, I could have almost pitied him.

Then he realized suddenly what the band was playing. Her song. The song she'd always loved better than any other. The song everybody loved to hear her sing. *La Golondrina*. Slowly George began to turn, as if some power were inexorably twisting him around in spite of all his efforts to prevent it.

He continued to turn till he faced the stage, and his protruding eyes glued fixedly on the center of the small platform.

*La Golondrina* stood there! The Swallow! Her scarlet dress shimmered in the smoke-filmed light. The bright jewels glittered on her fingers, in her hair, on her throat. Her black head was lifted and, as George watched, her hibiscus-petal lips parted, and her pure voice lifted, soaring, following the threnodic melody.

*La Golondrina*! It was a ritual in Bill Blue's dancehall. When the Swallow sang *La Golondrina* not a foot moved, not a tongue profaned that rendition by so much as a whisper. The clientele of Bill Blue's dancehall not only loved the Swallow, they respected her. And if you know

the waterfront cafés of Colon, that's a mouthful!

But something was wrong this time, and Farrell was not too dumb to get it, quick. Because nobody looked toward the stage with adoring, reverent eyes. Nobody hesitated for an instant to go right on dancing, chattering and laughing and ordering drinks. Nobody paid the slightest attention to what George Farrell was so sure that he saw and heard.

AND Farrell was transfixed there, staring at her with a dread, ghastly stare, staring at the square little box of a stage which *La Golondrina* had all to herself. Farrell didn't exactly stand there. He hung there, like a man suspended in air, while the black band worked itself up through a series of shattering explosions to a banging crescendo that seemed to shake down the roof.

Panic jarred George loose from his mesmeric state. He whirled, plowed his way through the dancers, flung himself against the bar and began pounding on it with his fist. He began shouting at the top of his bull-throated roar.

"Hey, there! Barkeep! You!"

The barkeeper hurried toward him, voluble with pacifying obsequious apologies.

"Si, senior! Sorry! I being very busy. What you want, senior?"

"Who's that dame?" George demanded furiously. "That dame singin' up there on the stage? Who is she?"

"Senior!" The barkeep looked blank, stared at George, then at the stage, then back at George. "You have make the mistake, senior. We have no singer now. We don't have any singer since—since *La Golondrina* was kill by some low down dog of a gringo, just a year ago tonight. That was very terrible thing, senior. Never was there any senorita like the Swallow, never will there be anybody like the Swallow ever again. That's why the orchestra never play *La Golondrina* any more."

Farrell gulped, and swallowed, and tried to speak, but the words wouldn't come out of his throat. The full force of his terror was on him. He clawed



at the bar before him, reeling backward, mouthing unintelligible curses in Spanish and English.

Then he whirled. He let out one gosh-awful scream, and charged for the side door like a berserk bull. Everybody got out of his way. Nobody wanted to follow him.

All we hoped was that he'd never come back.

Nobody would have followed him if Bill Blue's curiosity hadn't been bigger than his fat, greasy body. The instant the Negro boys started to play again, and the dancers began to circulate and jabber, Bill sneaked out the side door to see where George was headed. The only light there was in the alley came through the two big side windows of the dancehall, so Bill left the door wide open in order to see better.

He went out—and in another minute he came racing back, panting, his eyes bulging, and grabbed me by the arm and dragged me toward the door. His teeth were chattering so I could hardly hear what he was saying.

"Francisco! Come quick! He have kill himself! With the knife stuck in his filthy heart. He is out in the alley, dead as a porpoise! *La Golondrina* is avenged!"

I didn't waste any time getting out there with him. One look at George was enough. He couldn't be any deader. I started to tell Bill we'd have to get the body out of sight, when I heard voices at the door. Both Bill and I whirled back, and stepped up to the door, and ordered everybody to stay in there and mind their own business, assuring them that there was nothing to be disturbed about.

To emphasize the fact that I meant it, I shut the door. Bill and I swung about then, and started to go pick up George's body. And we both stopped, and I felt the hair rise on the back of my neck.

**T**HE body was not there. The light from the nearest window revealed the spot clearly enough, but the body was gone. The Swallow was standing not two feet from where George had

been lying, and Mike Geary, the best friend George ever had in the world, his shipmate for more years than I ever knew, had just come to a halt at sight of her. The window light outlined her plainly enough for anybody's eyes.

Mike Geary looked at me, and I thought he seemed pretty white. The Swallow gave me a wan smile.

"Poor Georg-a," she said slowly. "Almost I am sorry for him. He did not know you, Francisco. Without the mustache you look so different."

I laughed shortly. "Well, I'm not sorry for him, not even now, after what he tried to do to you! I didn't want him to recognize me." I turned to Geary. "What did you do with the body, Mike? Nobody touched him, you know. The fool killed himself."

Geary stood like a stone, and his eyes held on my face, intent, with an almighty queer expression in them.

"Just what happened here tonight, Francisco?"

I shrugged. "What happened a year ago tonight is the important thing. George tried to kill the Swallow. We were laying for him tonight. We had everybody set, to pretend not to see her, not to hear her, and to try to make George think he didn't really see her. All we wanted to do was scare the living daylights out of him with a fake ghost, so he wouldn't ever show up here again. Well—it worked. Too well. He thought he was haunted, and he killed himself."

Geary sighed like a man at the end of a long rope.

"Yes, He thought he was haunted. All through this last year, the poor devil nearly drove himself mad, seeing her everywhere he looked. I came up here tonight, because I wanted to see you, to get you aside and tell you that it had got to be more than he could stand. He was afraid of what he would see if he came here to the dancehall, and he knew just as surely as we docked at Cristobal he couldn't keep his feet from bringing him here. He couldn't face it. Two days ago, he stabbed himself to death. We buried him at sea."

*Next Issue: I'VE GOT TO BELIEVE IT, by Bruce Walker*



# The Terror Mummy

By

JACK B. CREAMER

*Author of "Horse Havoc," etc.*

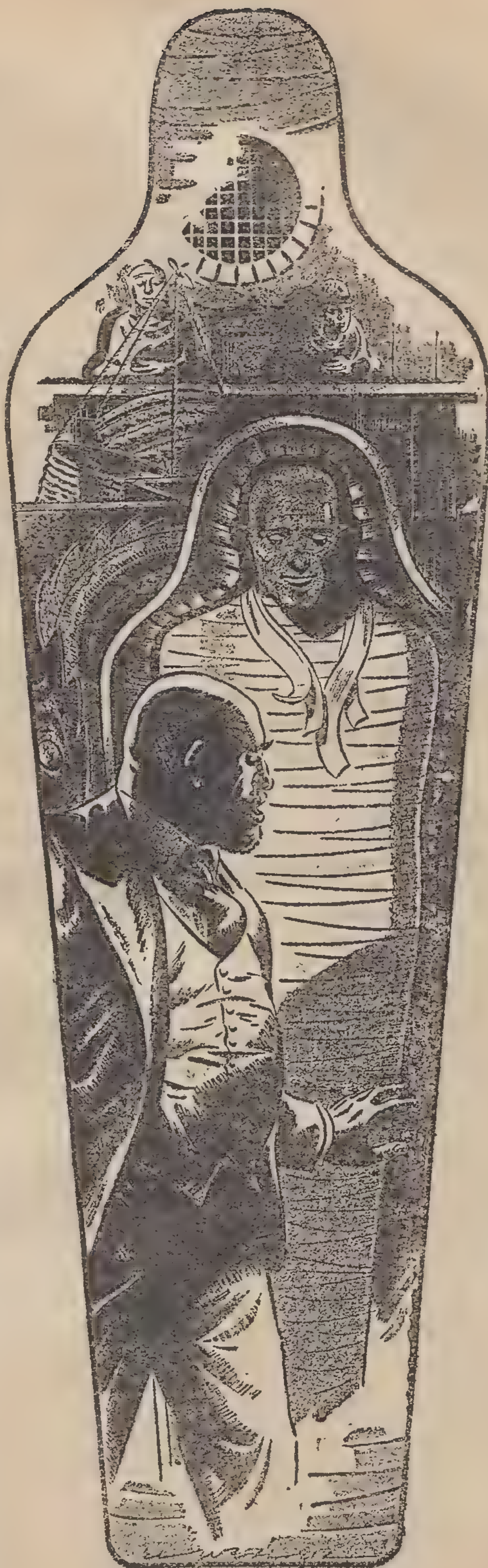
*Hate and Revenge Plague Kirsoff  
for Twenty Years, but Greater  
Evils Lurk in the Egyptian Crypts!*

THE rain had stopped at last, leaving the street a glistening black groove of shiny asphalt that rippled and quivered under the dim street lamps and the keen wind as though it were a snake come alive. It was a queer sort of street, anyway, as it seemed to force itself into this musty neighborhood, writhing by the moldering old flats and decrepit buildings of a departed era; and finally winding up in a baffled dead end overlooking the oily and ugly waters of the East River.

There was a three-story house near the end of this sinister street, an old brick and sandstone affair which can best be described as a house with a bad odor. A sign of tarnished and half-obliterated gold letters creaked dismally in the wind above the worn steps of the stoop. It read:

KIRSOFF'S PRIVATE MUSEUM

But the old building was not as dilapidated within as it appeared from without. There were well-made locks on the strong doors, and serviceable shutters for the windows. Ivan Kirsoff



Kirsoff lived among his antiques



took no chances where it concerned his antiques and art treasures.

He stood now just within the door, peering out like a gnome at the deserted street.

Kirsoff was a short and rotund little man with a stubby gray beard and a pate as shiny and barren as the thoroughfare at which he looked. His eyes were a moist and watery brown, his nose bulbous, his teeth yellow and stained. Clothes always hung and draped themselves clumsily on his chubby body. On the hat-rack in the corner was the kind of faded green fedora one might associate with an impoverished poet or threadbare philosopher—certainly not with a museum owner.

Yet Kirsoff was neither poet nor philosopher. He was a dealer in curios and antiques. Collectors had implicit faith in his integrity and paid exorbitant prices for his curios and *objets d'art*. Nobody ever suspected that any of his pieces were fraudulent. His skillfully manufactured papyri delighted Egyptologists. Counterfeit scarabs, bogus manuscripts, and ancient cut-glass—imported from Bavaria—were snapped up eagerly. In fifteen years, Mr. Kirsoff had amassed a tidy fortune by bamboozling a select public.

However, Kirsoff had not always been so opulent, so respected, so clever in his forgeries. There was one bitter pill in his ointment. Some twenty years ago he had been caught red-handed in a swindle by a raw-boned young plainclothes cop, and Mr. Kirsoff had spent three years up the river in meditation on the theorem that crime does not pay. That, of course, was in the days when he was slender and bore the name of Ralsinsky. Now, nobody knew the antique dealer, Kirsoff, as the swindling Ralsinsky.

But Kirsoff remembered—with a bitterness that was almost appalling. He had never forgotten the young Irish policeman who had tripped him up by sheer luck. And Ivan Kirsoff, deep in his heart, had vowed revenge. The years had not blunted his hatred; rather, they had intensified it.

A man came along the quiet street, his dark topcoat buttoned up about

his burly figure against the clutching fingers of the wind. Kirsoff's face lighted up with an oily smile, and he quickly opened the door to admit this expected guest.

"Come in, Inspector Pancoast," he said heartily. "I was afraid the storm would detain you. Come right along to my private study where we can have a glass of wine while we talk."

"Weather never stops policemen and postmen," chuckled Pancoast, divesting himself of his damp overcoat.

Ensconced in a big leather chair which had come from medieval Florence—all of Kirsoff's furniture and furnishings in his private office were authentic—the big inspector smacked his lips appreciatively over the mellow wine and came to the point.

"So you have an unusual object," he said. "A curio that you feel sure my brother will want to add to his collection."

"Exactly, Inspector," agreed Kirsoff earnestly. "Here, let me fill your glass again. Yes—Boyd Pancoast will be crazy to add this object to his Egyptian collection. I wanted you to see it first."

"I don't know much about this sort of stuff," Pancoast grated. "I don't know why you didn't send for my brother instead of me."

"Oh, I will, but I thought that you should see it."

"All right, Kirsoff. What is it?"

THE art dealer waited till the inspector had finished his second glass of wine.

"The object is," he said slowly, "the mummy of Ptolemy, the Fourth."

"Which means little to me," said Pancoast drowsily. "It's warm and cozy in here, after that raw wind."

"Yes, isn't it? About the mummy, Inspector. You see, the story connected with it goes back some time—twenty years, to be exact."

The officer frowned. He was having difficulty correlating and focusing his thoughts.

"Twenty years?" Pancoast said. "An Egyptian mummy ought to go back twenty centuries, oughtn't it?"

"Quite so, but this is an unusual mummy," answered Kirsoff, his moist



brown eyes seemed to flow clammy over the corpulent figure of his guest. "In this case, the story begins twenty years ago with a struggling Russian artisan who was trying to gain a foothold in this country. He was succeeding when a young pup of a copper luckily stumbled into a little deal which violated the silly laws of this country, and Ralsinsky was sent to prison.

"You look much surprised, Inspector. Would you remember that far back—to such an insignificant episode in the life of an Irish policeman? But, of course not! So I'll tell you. I was Ralsinsky. Queer—now that I think of it. That young cop's name was the same as yours—Pancoast."

The police inspector uttered a gurgling cry and tried to struggle to his feet. But he was powerless to move; every muscle in his body was paralyzed.

"It is the wine," sighed Kirsoff wearily. "Don't alarm yourself, my friend, or try to fight it. There is no use. It won't kill you for an hour, and meanwhile, there is no known antidote for it. So just relax and listen. I want you to understand my little joke."

The poisoned inspector's bulging eyes traveled to his wine glass and then back to the smirking, snarling face of his host. Only his eyes lived; otherwise he was utterly helpless.

"I was not tricking you, Inspector," Kirsoff went on, gloating, his voice edged with passion and venom as he talked. "I am really going to sell your brother that mummy. But how silly to offer the mummy of a Ptolemy. Just between you and me, I haven't a genuine one. But I can make a splendid imitation. After twenty years of hard work I have learned to duplicate a great many things. And I discovered and perfected a new liquid chemical that tans and grays and desiccates a body until it mummifies beautifully."

**H**HE PAUSED, went on:

"I'm sorry we do not have the time for me to demonstrate it to you, because you won't live long enough. However, I want you to know that *you* are to be the mummy of Ptolemy! I

shall sell *your* body to your brother next week. Ironical and poetic, don't you think? Also, I shall be able to dispose of all evidence of murder at the same time."

The blood-suffused face of the police inspector almost quivered in his terrific attempt to burst the invisible bonds which chained him. He did succeed in unlocking his jaw the slightest bit.

"You—you—" he gasped hoarsely, expelling the last vestige of air from his lungs. And then his eyes set and he went completely rigid, staring glassily at his enemy.

Kirsoff smiled to himself. He drew forth a handkerchief and mopped his perspiring brow. It had been an ordeal, at that. He arose, stepped over to his victim and passed his pudgy hand across the man's face. Inspector Pancoast did not even blink. He felt for the pulse. It had stopped. Mike Pancoast was as dead as he would ever be.

Breathing easier now, Kirsoff set to work. Puffing and panting, he lifted his victim by the shoulders and then dragged him out of the office and along the first floor of the gloomy old museum to the stairs leading to the basement. Down these he tumbled the body. Then he removed his coat and followed.

Stripping Pancoast of his clothes, Kirsoff burned everything in the furnace. He clipped and shaved the head of the corpse, and then pried open the jaws with a steel tool and critically examined the teeth. Finding three which showed signs of modern dentistry, he took a hammer and a small chisel and knocked them out. Then he studied the profile of the rigid face and methodically used the hammer to smash the nose.

All these preparations done with, he opened a large old-fashioned safe in his workroom and took out a stone crock of vile-smelling, almost viscous, gray liquid. With a paintbrush he began painting the corpse with the fluid. Several times, as the devastating liquid instantly started pulling the skin dry and tight over the bones, the dead detective's legs or arms twitched in a cadaveric spasm.



Kirsoff wanted to scream and run from the house. But, biting his lip in sadistic determination, he forced himself to complete his gruesome task. And at last it was done. The body was visibly shrinking and turning a dull dun color. Within an hour it looked as though it had slept for centuries in an ancient crypt in Egypt.

Now came the artistic part. Kirsoff carefully wrapped the body in yards and yards of grave cloth he had taken beforehand from a worthless but genuine mummy. He added redolent spices and the debris from the mummy he had previously unwrapped, and then placed his new creation within an ornate sarcophagus which stood ready. Ptolemy the Fourth was all ready. All Kirsoff had to do now was wait a few days for his mummy to age.

Cleaning up everything carefully, burning all odds and ends in the furnace, Kirsoff placed the lid on the sarcophagus and went upstairs. He started violently and shivered as he thought he heard a hoarse, gurgling voice saying:

"You—you—"

Ridiculous, he knew. But he scurried up to the first floor like a frightened rabbit, locking the basement stair door behind him with trembling hands.

He didn't sleep any that night. In fact, there wasn't any night left. The first pale gray of a haggard dawn greeted him as he climbed to his living quarters on the third floor. But he was happy. After twenty years he had consummated a clever and diabolical revenge.

**I**T WAS five days before Kirsoff dared contact Boyd Pancoast. During the interim he watched the newspapers for information about the missing Inspector Michael Pancoast. There was only one brief item that stated that the inspector seemed to have left town for a few days. It was a disappointment, but such was fame. Pancoast wasn't even missed—not even by his brother.

On the fifth day Boyd Pancoast came, at Kirsoff's request, to view his mummy. Kirsoff had prepared care-

fully for this occasion. He had taken two of his hired attendants to bring up the sarcophagus from the basement and place it upright against the wall in the midst of the Egyptian relics in the left wing. It made an effective looking museum piece.

But Ivan Kirsoff wasn't as happy as he had been. Like a miasmic fog, an unseen but distinctly felt cloud had been slowly gathering about this weird old building on the dispirited, snaky street. The days weren't so bad; there was the help around. But at night Kirsoff was alone with all these relics of the moldering past and the grave.

He felt that a ghastly familiar, growing stronger day by day, was dogging his footsteps wherever he went. That was ridiculous, of course. Many a man had been killed in thousands of ways, and nothing like this ever happened. But Kirsoff couldn't shake off this unseen shadow which settled more closely about him and seemed to strangle him a little more each day.

Kirsoff hadn't removed the lid of the sarcophagus since the night he had placed it on the mummy case. This morning, as he waited for the arrival of Boyd Pancoast, he dismissed his helpers and removed the lid himself. He screamed, trembled like a sapling in a high wind, almost letting the lid crash to the floor.

The shaven-headed and gray, battered features of Inspector Pancoast, altogether unrecognizable now, were twisted in a hideous, leering grin—as though Pancoast knew a secret Kirsoff didn't. It was too late to try to change the features; they were set in a mask like iron. An indefinable, fetid odor emanated from the case.

"By the sacred icon of St. Peter!" whispered Kirsoff. "I'll be glad to get rid of this thing quickly."

And a ghostly echo seemed to burst into being within his brain, like a bursting star shell expands in the sky.

"You—you—"

The arrival of the Egyptologist brought Kirsoff out of his jitters. The big man, older and grayer, but an unpleasantly close counterpart of his dead brother, examined the mummy



carefully. Kirsoff regained his composure and rattled off his prepared story about how this mummy came into his possession. It was a good story and the trappings were authentic.

"All right," agreed Boyd Pancoast at length, sniffing as though he smelled something, too. "I will purchase this mummy. What do you ask for it?"

"Three thousand dollars," said Kirsoff. "And it's a bargain at that price."

"There's no doubt that it is genuine," said the Egyptologist, "but isn't your price a little too high?"

"I didn't get the mummy for nothing, Mr. Pancoast," replied Kirsoff with dignity.

"No, no, I suppose not. I never saw a mummy with such a facial expression before. Well—I'll take it. I'll write you a check, and I'll send a moving van to pick up the sarcophagus the first thing in the morning. I'll come myself—just to take care of things, you know."

"Of course," agreed Kirsoff craftily. "But why don't you have your brother come or send a couple of policemen to guard it?"

And in the back of his mind—or was it loud in the middle of the chamber—there sounded the strangled words, "You—you—"

But Boyd Pancoast was deaf to this.

"I don't know where the inspector is," he admitted. "He's disappeared temporarily."

**T**EMPORARILY, was good. Kirsoff led the way to his office, smiling to himself.

After the Egyptologist had departed Kirsoff began wishing he had taken his purchase with him. It gave him an eerie, ugly feeling to have the thing remain here another hour. And it was such a good joke. After a few more days of the inspector's "temporary" absence the police and his brother would begin to get frantic.

Kirsoff could imagine the search. Boyd Pancoast would eventually offer a reward, of course—he was a wealthy man. The Bureau of Missing Persons would tie itself into knots. The rest of the police department would

run around in circles. And all the time the corpse of the frantically sought man would be grinning in a sarcophagus in the anxious Egyptologist's own private collection. What a perfect finale to a twenty-year-old revenge! The only trouble was that nobody could enjoy the grim jest save Kirsoff and Mike Pancoast—and Mike Pancoast was dead.

A sudden idea came to the demoniac little antique forger. Why not write the police an anonymous letter throwing suspicion on himself? He would like to see what they would do. It certainly would bring them running. But, no! That was a foolish, dangerous thought. They might unearth and uncover his real identity as Ralsinsky, and that might prove fatal. Instead, he must content himself with silent laughter. So he pulled the musty green fedora down over his bald head and trotted off to the bank to deposit Boyd Pancoast's check.

The sky was overcast, lowering, when he returned home late in the afternoon. There wasn't much business—he did most of his transactions by appointments, anyway—and he closed the museum early. A little before six o'clock he had to start turning on lights all over the place. It grew dark with a positive vindictiveness that was almost personal. And, turn on lights though he did, the electric bulbs seemed to do little more than push the gloomy shadows back toward the corners of the various rooms where they seemed to lick their chops and slink in wait to leap out upon him.

Fantastic! It was rubbish! But Ivan Kirsoff felt stifled and terribly uneasy. After a lonely supper which he prepared for himself, his frugality finally overcame his newly acquired reluctance toward the dark, and he slowly made his way downstairs to turn out the various lights. Such extravagance was idiotic.

He avoided the left wing until last, slowly turning the first floor into an ocean of darkness, leaving only that last island of light to be flicked out just before he turned tail and scurried back to his quarters upstairs. Intensely disgusted with himself for such



childish fears, he finally came to the wing of Egyptian curios and went about turning off the lights.

As he was passing the alcove where the sarcophagus of the bogus Ptolemy the Fourth leaned against the wall, he glanced furtively over his shoulder at the thing. With a start he saw that he had forgotten to replace the lid, and the hideous, mutilated face of Inspector Pancoast leered straight at him. He gave vent to a little yelp of fear as he rested his hand on the light switch.

"Curse you!" he snarled. "You'll be out of here before noon tomorrow, damn you. So grin all you like."

He flipped down the switch, plunging the room into Stygian blackness. There was just a faint glow of light from the bulb out in the corridor. He whirled to run for the dubious safety of that wan refuge, when his eyes fell once more upon the Egyptian casket of his dead victim.

And then Kirsoff was too paralyzed to run.

From the sarcophagus came that taintful effluvia of evil, a stifling odor which seemed to catch him around the throat and throttle him where he stood. But it wasn't this that caused his panic. A ghastly greenish glow emanated from the figure of the bogus Ptolemy, a visible aura which outlined the body perfectly. It was—good God!—it was the spiritual entity, the *ka*, of Mike Pancoast!

**K**IRSOFF nearly went mad with fright.

"No!" he screamed aloud. "No! It isn't so! My reason knows better. I won't believe it! You're dead, do you understand? You're dead, and you'll stay dead. You can't harm anybody!"

Drawn by his own rage and a deadly fascination, he crept slowly forward to confront the phosphorescent figure within the inclined mummy case.

"Laugh!" he snarled. "Laugh from your place near the throne of Thoth, Ptolemy. But I have the last laugh, after all. Three thousand dollars your brother paid me for you—a thousand dollars for each year you caused me to spend in the penitentiary, and—"

He broke off in a strangled, gur-

gling scream as the vapor of the miasmic odor—or something quite as intangible—clamped down terrifically upon his throat. He fought against invisible bonds to escape, kicking and struggling madly—like a person in a nightmare who cannot escape inevitable doom, although unbound. In a few moments even the sound of Kirsoff's clawing and scratching nails upon the sides of the mummy case ceased, and silence—like that of the crypt—fell upon the dark chamber....

It was broad daylight when the police found Ivan Kirsoff. Summoned by the attendants who could not arouse their employer, the police smashed down the front door and entered. They were almost overcome by the evil smell from the left wing and their subsequent discoveries were even more horrifying.

Commissioner Enfield summed matters up for Boyd Pancoast when he got the Egyptologist down to his office a couple of hours later.

"It's horrible beyond words, Mr. Pancoast," he said. "The medical examiner had to perform his autopsy on the mummy with a hammer and chisel, but—but we found your brother. Kirsoff had turned him into that mummy, somehow. You have the written report in your hand. Kirsoff was stone dead when the squad got there, of course."

Boyd Pancoast read through the report without a muscle of his face changing.

Then he looked up.

"The ways of Providence are very strange," he said gravely. "Embalm- ing a human body in this fashion, Kirsoff imprisoned all the gases and liquids within. No wonder there was a generation of gas and a sort of miasmic fog such as your men describe. I imagine Kirsoff must have thought the ghost of Mike was after him, and he simply died of heart failure."

"Yes," said the commissioner very gravely. "That's what is written in the report for the record. It explains things satisfactorily. But it doesn't explain how the hands of the—mummy came to be clamped around Kirsoff's throat when he was found."



# The Four Who Came Back

By TALLY MASON

*Author of "The Room in the Annex," "Lord of Evil," etc.*



Redding arranged the bodies so it would look like a fight.

*When They Put Don Mason Off the Train, He Landed Where the Dead Return for Vengeance!*

**I**F THE brakeman had not found me just before we got to Milwaukee, and if he had not kicked me off the train, this story might never have been told. As it was, I landed in unknown country just before midnight.

Far away, against the sky, I could see the glow of lights, and knew that Milwaukee lay there. But how far, I could not judge, and much as I would have liked to finish my free ride into

the city that night, I didn't want to try finding my way across strange country in the darkness.

Rather than go exploring for a village, I turned toward the first light that came out of the darkness. At the outset, I knew that I would have to tell exactly what happened to me, because I was much too tired to make up a story.

The house was far back from the main road, set in a little grove of



trees, pressing close upon it. There was a strangely repellant atmosphere about the place that made me hesitate for a moment. Then I went up and knocked on the door.

A pretty, dark woman answered my knock. She had come silently along the passage beyond the door, and stood before me suddenly, holding the lamp high in her hand.

"Good evening," I said. "Can you put me up for the night?"

Without answering, she stepped aside and motioned me to enter. I stepped past her. Perhaps it would not be necessary to tell my story after all, I thought.

**B**ESIDES the woman, there were two men in the house. Both seemed younger than the woman at first.

But as she came forward into the light, and bent between the men to return the lamp to the table, I saw that she was considerably older than I had at first taken her to be. At that moment she looked forty at least. The men were certainly not more than thirty.

The men looked at me curiously. One of them turned to the woman.

"Who's this, Amy?" he asked.

Amy shrugged her shoulders.

"He hasn't told me. Asked if we could put him up, and I supposed we could."

"The name is Don Mason," I said. "Frankly, I've just been kicked off the train to Milwaukee for taking a free ride in a box car."

The men smiled vaguely. The woman did not appear to be interested. The three of them began talking to themselves, ignoring me utterly. The two men were called Con and Al. Having done me the honor of noticing me, they seemed to have forgotten me. I spied a cot in one corner of the long room, and motioned toward it.

"Could I sleep there?" I asked.

The men merely nodded. The woman said nothing. Somewhat disconcerted, I went over to the cot and lay down. I was dead tired. Yet I was destined to get little sleep that night.

I had hardly closed my eyes, when

my ears caught ominous and suggestive words. Opening one eye warily, I looked toward the table. The three were sitting close around it, their heads together. The man, called Con, was talking.

"It's either Redding or us, now! There's no other way out. The minute we hijacked his load, we let ourselves in for it. When he comes, there'll not be much parley, if I know Redding."

I had not grasped the full import of what had been said before the man himself appeared. He had let himself in silently, and the first intimation of his presence was his abrupt, sharp voice from the threshold.

"Brought the boys, eh, Amy?"

At the sound of his voice, the three in the room whirled about, facing him, their hands going instinctively to concealed weapons. But Redding's hands were in his coat pockets, and both pockets bulged with hidden weapons.

"Didn't think I'd come so early, did you?" Redding went on, chuckling evilly.

**I** DIDN'T like the sound of his voice. It was ominous, menacing. The three at the table seemed to feel this, too, for their faces gave them away. They stood in mortal terror of the man who had crept upon them so silently.

Redding went on talking.

"You bunch of lousy hijackers! How'd you ever expect to get away with that? You could have picked on someone else, but not Redding."

What happened then came almost too swiftly for my sight. Two shots rang out, and the two men at the table pitched forward and crumpled to the floor. One of them shuddered a little, that was all. Both were dead almost instantly.

The woman had acted almost as quickly. She had drawn her gun, and sent a shot at Redding. Almost at the same moment he had fired again, and Amy went down. For a moment Redding stood there. Then, he strode forward and began to move the bodies about. I lay still as death, fearing that any moment Redding might see me in the dark corner where the cot



was, might send me to join the three he had so ruthlessly shot.

Redding completed his evil job, at last. When he stood up, I saw that the woman's shot had hit him in the arm. Blood was spotting the cloth of his coat. Still he had not noticed me. I hardly dared breathe. He looked carefully around the room, before he bent to pocket the two revolvers the dead men had never had a chance to draw, and left his own in their place.

Then he turned abruptly and went out as silently as he had come. For a moment I waited. Then, I jumped lightly to the floor, now wide awake, still shuddering in fear that the man might come back, and went swiftly to the still bodies on the floor. Redding had arranged the bodies in such a way that it looked as if a battle had taken place between the men and the woman!

Somehow I found my way out of that sinister house. I remember racing wildly down the first road that offered itself, and coming at last into a village there. The first person I ran into directed me to the sheriff's home.

Incoherent as my story was, my earnestness must have impressed the sheriff, for as soon as he had dressed himself, we were making our way back down the road I had traversed so wildly only a short time before. The sheriff's car brought us to the house in the trees in short order.

The light was out. For a moment I was afraid that Redding had come back. Then I noticed that the sheriff was staring at me curiously.

"Say," he said at last, "what is this? You telling me that there's been another murder in this place."

"I saw it," I said. "As plain as I see you."

The sheriff went on ahead, but I was

close behind. The house was empty! There was no scrap of furniture anywhere about save in the room I had occupied. There, a rickety bed and a broken table were pushed over against one wall. The ancient coverings on the bed were rumpled. I had lain there!

The sheriff was angry.

"Tell me that story again, brother," he said.

The shock of finding the place empty calmed me considerably, and I told what I had seen a good deal more coherently than I had first blurted it out.

After I had finished the sheriff said:

"I don't know where you got that story, or what you've been drinking, but Con Albrite and Al Paxton shot it out with Amy Pearson here about three months ago. It was a clear case. And Redding had nothing to do with it, though those three crooks had hijacked his liquor."

Before the sheriff was through talking, I knew that he had looked on the whole story as a fabrication and the imagination of a drunken mind. He thought I had read the story in the newspapers and had dreamed about it.

The up-shot of it all was, that I got a berth in the town jail for the remainder of the night.

But the next morning, when he let me out, the sheriff looked plenty puzzled himself—and a little apologetic. He couldn't explain just how it was that the gangster, Redding, had died during the night of an infection from a bullet wound in the arm. He couldn't explain how the bullet they found in that wound had come from a police revolver that Amy Pearson had stolen from a drunken deputy a long time ago.

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#### COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

*Gripping Complete Novelets by HENRY KUTTNER  
and CARSON JUDSON, Plus Eleven Other Stories by  
AUGUST W. DERLETH, MARIA MORAVSKY,  
TALLY MASON, NORMAN A. DANIELS,  
and Other Popular Authors*



# TIGER! TIGER!

By O. M. CABRAL

*Author of "Food of the Ghoul," "The Dead and the Damned," etc.*



Jason was at the mercy of the demon-thing

**J**ASON WEST glanced at the yellowed face of the clock ticking on the kitchen shelf. When he heard the sound of the postman's car he ran out on the sagging porch and down the steps.

Beside the rural mail box perched at the dusty roadside there was a decrepit old flivver. A little round man thrust out his head and handed Jason a folded newspaper. Jason smiled back at shrewd, friendly blue eyes. The postman's face was as

*Hate Haunts the Ancient House—and Jason West Fears the Loathsome Cat His Dead Aunt Left as Her Legacy!*

brown and wrinkled as a frost-bitten pippin. His clasp was warm and hard.



"How be ye, boy?" he asked. "Reckon ye wouldn't remember Caleb Healey, used to be notary over to Morton's Mill?"

"I sure do." The intense loneliness that Jason had felt overnight suddenly seemed weak and foolish. "Haven't changed a hair. What's the secret?"

The old postman chuckled, opened the car door and stepped out beside Jason.

"Fact is," he considered, "folks nor things don't change so danged fast around here. Still, they do some. Folks come and go. Old folks keep a-dying off. Young'uns leave. You'll find this farm run down some from what you remember. Le's see, how long?"

"I was fifteen when I—left. Say, fourteen years ago."

Without glancing back over his shoulder Jason was painfully aware of the rambling farmhouse, with its ghastly yellow paint sloughing from warped clapboards. The rich riverside meadow was now thickly clumped with thistle, crab-grass and willow brush. No plow had furrowed the weed-grown fields for at least ten years.

"We was all curious," the old man gossiped, "about whether she druv ye out or whether ye run." He scratched his head vigorously.

"Both," Jason West dryly admitted. "I left as soon as I was old enough to shift for myself."

"She never did let on." The postman sucked contentedly on his bubbling pipe. "Your Aunt Han was an almighty close-mouthed woman."

Too vividly, Jason remembered the bleak, harsh woman who had dominated that house. Old fear stirred darkly in his brain, the terror of a helpless boy who had wanted to kill in order to escape Hannah West's cruel tyranny. Instead, he had run away.

"I still don't know," he told Caleb Healey, "why she left me her damned farm. If I wasn't up against it, I don't think I'd want to stay. The whole place gives me the willies. Maybe I can clean up the farm a bit and then sell out."

"Ye might," the postman agreed. "But not to nobody around here."

**B**OTH men, their eyes attracted by a flicker of movement, looked suddenly toward the ugly house. A huge yellow cat leaped from the porch railing, glared balefully, and slunk swiftly around the corner.

"There's one danged thing," Caleb Healey exclaimed with strange violence, "I reckon I'd get rid of, and soon! I'll never look at that sneakin' yellow critter but what I'll be reminded of—"

He paused. Jason West looked at the postman oddly.

"You must be one of those people who can't abide cats? Some folks, you know, have a feeling about them."

"'Tain't that," Caleb Healey denied, frowning. "It's—well, ye may as well know. It was me found your Aunt Han dead. Papers had piled in the mailbox three-four days. Kitchen door was unlocked. I don't mind saying, boy, it give me a turn when I see her a-layin' lean and cold on her bed upstairs. Her eyes was wide open. The undertaker never did get 'em to shut right. And danged if that blasted yellow critter wasn't a-cuddled up close to the corpse, purring and blinking. There's claw-marks yet on my hand."

The vicious scars were barely healed. The picture conjured up in Jason's mind was sickeningly vivid.

"Kept follerin' her around," Caleb Healey went on. "Allus nigh to her skirts. Billy, she called it. After the buryin' it hung around the empty house. I tried to feed it some. Hell, it wouldn't eat anything, not even good raw meat. A spoiled critter, I say, if ever there was one!"

Jason knew about that. The dead woman's pet had strangely fastidious tastes. It drank milk, but wouldn't touch the raw scraps he put before it. An unfriendly beast! So far he had not been able to touch the big tawny cat that was faintly striped like a tiger.

As he walked back toward the house, Jason's lips were pursed and he was whistling tunelessly. Even before he crossed the porch he heard



the teetering squeak-squeak of the rocker. The sound stopped abruptly at his first footfall on the kitchen floor and he stopped his whistling automatically. For one frozen instant Jason stood still, his heart thundering. At that moment he was once again a timid small boy, barefoot, shaking with habitual terror of the gaunt woman who rocked in that chair. Nothing had maddened her so much as his boyish tuneless whistling. She would shriek at him to stop, glare wildly, half-insanely at him and then run madly into the house or upstairs, her hands over her ears.

When he thrust through the doorway into the kitchen the cat jumped to the floor leaving the empty chair shaking.

Jason laughed shortly. Everything in the house reminded him too keenly of the woman he had hated. Even the worn linoleum on the kitchen floor was the same crude, beflowered pattern he remembered as a boy. The hideous brown wall paper would have to come off. He would burn all her baggy black clothes—tear everything of Hannah West out of the place. Then he could remain.

The cat crouched, yellow-eyed, unblinking, beside the old-fashioned range. Jason reached out a tentative, caressing hand.

"We're going to forget her!" he muttered. "She's dead. Nothing can bring her back. So we might as well be friends, see?"

His hand hovered inches away from staring amber eyes. The cat never moved. Slitted pupils widened slightly. Rubbery black lips grinned, baring white teeth curved sharp as a serpent's fangs. The cat hissed softly.

"To hell with you, then!" Jason felt an abrupt stirring of puzzled anger. "See if *I* spoil you, you yellow hellion! And if you don't like what I feed you, go catch a rat!"

He turned back into the dining room to tear down a framed chromo hanging over a cabinet crammed with dusty knick-knacks. The vacant space made a lighter rectangle on the time-fouled wall.

The portrait was crudely realistic.

Every time he had passed up the steep, narrow stairs to the second floor Hannah West's dead gaze had followed him mockingly. With a frenzy of hatred Jason tore the bone-dry paper to crackling shreds, then flung it on the hot coals of the kitchen range. The flame roared up the chimney in a wild gust, and his lips felt dry.

**T**HEN Jason went upstairs and methodically emptied the closet and old bureau of the dead woman's clothes. Threadbare, old-fashioned dresses vividly suggested his aunt's tall, gaunt shape. He held the garments gingerly away from him as he took them outside and flung them all on one heap. They had a faint, musky odor that stirred prickles on his scalp—a queer, animal odor, not unpleasant, yet vaguely troubling.

After he had soaked the pile with coal oil, the huge flaring bonfire gave him a deep satisfaction. Already, Jason morbidly imagined, the air was purer, the house less redolent of Hannah West's grim personality. In a few days, he promised himself, all trace of the dark past would be erased from the place.

There was the cat, Jason, eating a frugal dinner, furtively eyed it through the window as it sat on the sill. Its paws were crossed. Yellow eyes, wide-open, stared out across the field, over the river.

Something about the odd attitude of the tawny beast struck Jason West with an instinctive suggestion of repugnance. Hannah West, she used to sit just like that! Staring out across the river, statue-still, her yellow hands crossed upon her bony knees.

When she sat that way she was deaf and blind. Anyone passing by the road might shout at her without getting a sign of an answer.

It would be as if only the empty shell of the gaunt woman sat there in her old rocking-chair.

Later, he went to bed and wrestled with sleep—tried to claw his way through the horror of nightmare into wakeful sanity. A pungent darkness lay on his breast, smothered his lips



and his nostrils. He screamed with the inarticulate terror of dream paralysis. It was as though warm, fetid breath fanned his sweating face.

The thing that was crushing all life from his body was soft, yet clinging, something frail, something that grew heavier and stronger. Soft, electric fur brushed Jason's rigid lips. He choked with anguished fear and disgust.

Then a hoarse scream tore through his tense throat. Jason sat up, abruptly breaking through the nightmare web. Shaking hands plucked at the familiar patchwork coverlet.

**P**ALE moonlight bathed the confines of the vacant bedroom. Jason reached for a cigarette, although his heart was still pumping unevenly. His body was damp with reeking sweat. The match flame shuddered in his hand.

When he was a child—when he had lived in this house—Jason had often been haunted by terrible nightmares. After he ran away, all that had ended. Now, he was discovering how deeply the roots of the present were sunk in the past.

"If I stay here," Jason thought moodily, "I'll probably just go nuts. She was crazy. Sly about it, but actually mad as a loon! And the house is soaked full of it. Maybe if I don't get away from here I'm due to go that way, too."

That thought brought an icy chill of fear, only a little less dreadful than smothering nightmare. Out there, Jason West had found the world to be wide and cold and cruel. But Hannah West couldn't follow him if he ran away again, if he fled from his own morbid terror of a woman now harmless and dead.

His night fears seemed childish by daylight. Jason, grimly shaving before a cracked mirror over the iron sink, twisted his lips in a thin smile. He would not leave. He would stay and fight it out with himself, else this dark obsession would slowly undermine sanity, like a creeping poison.

Caleb Healey, the aged postman, had been Jason's only contact

with rural neighbors. Eagerly, Jason dashed outside to meet the old man's flivver.

Shrewd blue eyes regarding him from a network of fine wrinkles were clear and sane as the swept sky. The sunlight felt good. Only solitude could be haunted by dread fear out of the past.

"Look," Jason said, "I wonder if you'll do me a small favor?" He glanced involuntarily over his shoulder before he turned blood-shot eyes toward the old man. "Bring me out some rat-poison, the kind you put out for rats when they get to running all over an old barn."

"Ain't nothing in that barn for a rat to eat," Caleb told him dryly. "Not so much as a wisp of straw. Ye got somethin' else on your mind, I reckon."

"It's the cat!" Jason laughed quaveringly. "I'm taking your advice, getting rid of it!"

"Don't blame you none," the old man approved. "Ain't any use keepin' a vicious critter like that. It's no comp'ny fer ye noway. I'll bring some rough-on-rats in the morning."

Suddenly Jason found himself spilling out all of his aching loneliness. He *had* to tell someone! This sane and friendly old man—

"Listen!" Jason cried hoarsely, plucking at Caleb Healey's ragged sleeve. "You've got to understand how it is! I don't like to hurt anything that lives, but this is different. It's not just an ordinary cat! It—it's something hellish! Good God, it even looks like her! I can't stand it! It keeps hanging around on purpose, sneaking behind me, watching, just so I won't ever forget!"

Caleb Healey looked suddenly pale and startled. His eyes narrowed, shrewdly studying Jason's distraught face.

"I reckon, boy," he said mildly, "ye been sick maybe, afore ye come here? Nerves all on edge, seems like."

Jason nodded dully.

"I recall" the old man continued, "ye was never a husky shaver. Some said Hannah West starved ye. We all know she was uncommon cruel to her orphan nevvie. Seemed like when



her young sister run off and married the man Hannah'd set her own cap for, your Aunt Han lived for nothin' but hate. Turned her mind, I reckon. Cursed 'em both. Sure enough, in not more'n a year, she could spit on both their graves."

"Maybe she poisoned my parents," Jason growled. "Damn funny—they died so sudden!"

"Never went near them," Caleb denied, shaking his head. "But there's some claim she didn't need to. There's some claim she just *willed* 'em to die—and they died." Then, abruptly, seeing Jason's staring eyes, old Caleb Healey chuckled dryly.

"But shucks!" he went on. "Anybody that gets themselves powerful disliked like your Aunt Han is bound to get talked about. And she's six feet under now, but folks've still got the habit of givin' this farm a wide miss. They know ye need comp'ny. But nobody won't never come nigh Hannah West's house. That's why, boy, ye've got to take to callin' on them."

"I haven't a friend in the world," Jason said bitterly. He shook his head sadly.

"Well now," Caleb Healey twinkled. "That's putting it strong. There's me an' Carrie. Might be Carrie's young cousin, Kate. School teacher, and pretty as any ye ever did see. I reckon that ought to do ye for a start, boy."

"I'll come soon," Jason promised gratefully. "Yes. I must get out more. You know," he added earnestly, "she never would let me go anywhere when I was a kid. An I keep thinking she's still here, alive some way, and able to punish me!"

**J**ASON kneaded the poison into hamburger. The meat should have been his own breakfast, but he had prepared it carefully for Billy, the striped yellow cat. The poison was so mixed with the raw meat that even a mouthful would be enough to jerk the beast's gaunt body with violent death-spasms.

Jason felt his own mouth watering. God, he was hungry! Almost reluctantly he put the chopped beef into a

clean saucer and slid it toward the crouching cat.

"Let's see you take that, you damned yellow devil!" he muttered.

The cat crouched in its accustomed place by the glowing stove. Baleful eyes watched Jason mix the poison into the food. The beast must be ravenous. Jason had starved it on purpose. It would eat the meat this time, he felt sure.

"Well," Jason snarled, "come on and get it!"

He kicked at the stove. The cat's slitted eyes widened, narrowed, widened, like a shutter opening, closing. When the shutter opened, blinding hate poured out hate that seared Jason's brain with electric force. When the shutter closed, amber eyes revealed only the impassive, owlsh stare of a feline thing.

The cat rose and stretched daintily. Then, with a disdainful hiss at Jason it pushed through the screen door and slunk outside. It looked backward once, head cocked over one shoulder, gloating at the man's helpless horror.

"You—"

The strangled cry wrenched from Jason's tight throat. No wonder the cat hadn't eaten the meat. It wasn't simply because it had suspected poison in the meat. It hadn't touched raw meat previously, either. No wonder!

She stood there, in the body of that gaunt yellow cat, looking back at him with an evil grin! She'd dropped all pretense, wasn't even trying to act at home in her borrowed feline body. Now that Jason *knew*, she didn't care. Jason groaned as he realized the error he had made. Hannah West had been fastidious about food. She'd lived on milk and herbs, and eaten meat now and then, but it had to be cooked just so and well-seasoned. And he had prepared the meat instead for the cat. . . .

Hannah West's own eyes glared at him with bleak, undying hatred—her eyes daring him, taunting him! Fiery anger seared the man's frame. His glazed eyes fixed on a rusted shotgun hanging from a hook. Maybe there were shells—Twin yellow moons



stabbed at his back as he took the gun, tremblingly, from its place on the wall.

She used to keep shells in a box behind the clock. Sure enough, when Jason groped there, his hand grasped a dusty time-stained cigar box. There were just three cartridges in it. He slid a shell into the rusted breech, savagely hoping that the damned weapon would work.

Suppose she couldn't be killed? Suppose she was evil incarnate, something immortal that lead shot couldn't harm? She had appeared to die, but had merely passed from one body to another. Could he, then, wholly destroy the gaunt beast's shape inhabited by a demon?

Sweat beaded Jason's pallid forehead. His hand tightened spasmodically on the gun butt as he stepped toward the screen door leading to the porch. The demoniac cat was gone. Intently watching Jason while he loaded the shotgun, it had simply turned and vanished before he could crash the killing charge into its evil brain.

All day Jason looked for the tawny cat. It did not return. The shotgun was loaded and ready in the kitchen. But the hellish victim did not show itself again.

Maybe, Jason thought with grim satisfaction, now, at last, Hannah was afraid of him. That must be it! If lead couldn't harm the demon cat, why had it fled to hide itself from him?

Anyway, it was good not to have the thing around—whatever it was. Maybe the yellow cat was gone for good! Maybe at last he was free from a mad obsession.

Jason bolted the screen door before going upstairs to bed and closed the windows. There were some things, after all, Jason sardonically reflected, that no cat could do. Being prisoned in a cat's body must be a grave disadvantage to a vengeful demon like Hannah West.

**B**RIGHT moonlight awoke Jason. The globe of the moon hung low in the black square of the window. Jason blinked and rolled over on his

back, wondering why his heart was thumping so madly.

She was in the room! Jason jerked toward an alien sound—strange, hoarse breathing nearby, in the shadow.

His hand twitched toward the night table where the oil lamp stood. He couldn't find the matches. He didn't dare turn his head from that rasping sound revealing a dread presence that he could sense but not see—that *thing* crouched at the foot of his bed.

Icy sweat dripped from his temples, crawled down his cheeks, soaked into the coarse pillow. Very slowly, Jason turned his head. The dark thing moved. The man's feet jerked up in spasmodic terror as a big furry ball raised up and began delicately crawling toward his face.

"Scat! Go away!" he shrieked, choking.

He couldn't move. Nightmare again! Only, this time, he seemed to be awake. Nightmare obsessed him with his eyes wide open, every strained sense alert. He couldn't shut his eyes, couldn't tear them away from hypnotic, lucent amber globes.

"Tiger, tiger burning bright  
in the forests of the night. . . ."

The yellow devil, inching slowly toward his face, was prowling terror. A thing spawned in the black heart of the jungle, or the abysmal pits of night. Tawny fur was striped with dark bands writhing like snakes in the bright moonlight. The cat crouched, arching sinuously, eyes blazing with terrible concentration.

Hypnotic coils of horror groped for Jason's brain—took hold, like clinging tendrils. A blow of his fist could hurl the thing from the bed! He could, if he could only summon his will, savagely twist the head from the furred body! All he had to do was lift his hands—but he could do nothing. He was helplessly paralyzed while she looked out from the slitted eyes. Hannah West, fiercely exultant, watched the helpless twitchings of her human prey.

Jason's lips opened but no sound came out. Every muscle strained in



futile agony. The thing's light weight rested on his chest. It leaned nearer, grinning. Its eyes, twin lighted hell caverns, yawned before Jason.

He felt utterly helpless. There was nothing he could do against this demon-thing. He had tried to poison it and had failed. He should have—yes, he should have realized. . . .

A thought struck his mind, tore it away from the hypnotic influence of those blazing eyes. What should he have realized. Why had he failed? Ah! He had treated the cat as a cat, not as Hannah West!

Jason's eyes rolled in his head. Thick blue cords stood out like welts on his straining throat. His lips pursed—and very thinly, from his mouth issued a dry whistling sound. He moistened his lips and then tried again, tried in that desperate moment, to whistle!

And then fantastically he was lying there, weak, perspiring and whistling! Not a strong whistle, but still a clear, shrill sound, a sound that used to drive Hannah West mad, drive her, shaking fitfully, away from the source!

The soft fur that had been rubbing against his throat was abruptly removed. Miasmatic breath purred hoarsely against his face. The fetid, pungent feline smell almost made his senses swim with vertigo, but he kept on whistling.

**T**HE slitted yellow eyes were opening and shutting with glinting speed. Jason caught a glimpse of awful fury in those amber globes, and then he felt the body of the striped cat jumping up and down on his body as if in impotent anger. Jason could almost imagine Hannah West stamping her foot and shaking her hands as he heard that infuriating whistling.

And then, the weight was gone from his chest. Jason heard the sound of the cat's body as it landed at the foot of the bed. There was a blurred flash of yellow fur in mid-air. Then he saw it outlined on the window sill, a big furry ball threshing around, hopping up and down ludicrously as it glared at him. Jason's throat was

parched but he dared not stop that whistling just yet.

From the window sill came an uncanny wild shriek of demoniac bafflement and despair. And, with a final stab of blinding hate coming from its blazing eyes, the hell-cat bounded downward into the corner-shadows of the room, into a hole in the floor that Jason could just see dimly, that he hadn't seen before.

He lay there, panting, weak. At last he summoned strength to get out of bed. Night's stars were paling as Jason dressed. Gray light crept into the sky and across the stubbled fields. That ghastly struggle seemed now like a vivid dream, but Jason knew that it had been stark reality.

One thought, somehow, kept drumming in his mind. It was silly, but he couldn't help thinking it. Hannah West used to flee from his whistling, but he always paid the penalty later. She always punished him somehow for his innocent whistling. What would that hell-cat do now because of his deliberate whistling? What *could* she do?

He tried to laugh it off. She couldn't do anything, of course. The cat was gone, Hannah West was conquered. But—but would she come back?

Jason built a fire and set a pot of coffee on the stove in the kitchen. Sunlight was bright across the purling river. Surely the whole thing had been unreal. The whole atmosphere was different now, curiously.

The familiar creak of the mail flivver sounded. Jason went outside to greet the postman.

"Say!" Caleb Healey piped, coming toward Jason. Then he stopped. His shrewd eyes noted the drawn look on Jason's face. "Ye look kinda seedy. Not sleeping well, eh?"

Jason nodded.

"Carrie'll have something good for that. But say! 'Bout that yellow critter o' yourn. Reckon ye didn't get to use that rat-poison, eh?"

Jason looked at him blankly. "Why? How'd you know?"

Caleb Healey chuckled. "'Cause the danged thing is lying down the road a  
(Concluded on page 97)



# The Hydroponic Monster

By MARIA MORAVSKY

*Author of "The Soul of the Cello," "Spider Woman," etc.*



It moved forward him like some prehistoric monster

*Vic Widmer Could See the Plant was Green—but Didn't Think the Plant Could See Green!*

**A**MONG the enormous stalks of tomatoes, and two-story-high lilies which Vic Widmer grew, experimenting with soilless agriculture, he spotted that morning a curious, cactuslike plant of vivid green.

"And how did you get here?" he said, smiling.

Hydroponics was his hobby, though he was a lawyer by vocation, and he



talked to his plants as one would to pets.

As he looked at the unusual cactus, it seemed to stir, from the roots up, giving the weird impression of a cat stretching.

Widmer took off his newly-fitted glasses with their modernistic, pointed-up lenses which made him somewhat resemble a curious faun. He wiped them, put them on again on his straight nose. No, the glasses were not blurred. Everything looked as before. Only during the time given to this procedure, the plant seemed to have doubled in size.

Widmer caught a sharp breath. He was used to the miraculously rapid growth of plants fed with a solution of minerals, but this was too much. Some dimly remembered superstitious belief was pushing itself in front of his consciousness, something about plants being endowed with wills of their own.

As the strange plant grew, literally by leaps and bounds, he watched its octopuslike leaves twisting impatiently, like green limbs trying to shake off some invisible bonds. He shuddered.

Then, after a brief, sober reflection, he laughed at himself.

"Hindu fakirs grow mangoes from seeds before the eyes of their audiences," he mused. "They are probably advanced students of hydroponics. If a radish can be grown from seed to the table in three days, it is possible for a naturally fast weed to grow much faster. I must have stumbled on some different proportion of the basic solution. Now, what did I put in there last time?"

He went to the northern end of his slat house, opened a beaverboard locker which served as chemical cabinet, and picked up a gallon jug, half full. He looked at the liquid and tried to remember. . . . The color was the same. He put the jug back into the cabinet, and sat down on the potting bench, his high forehead wrinkled in thought.

No, he had not changed the formula. He had used the same old basic solution of Epsom salts, calcium nitrate, primary potassium phos-

phate, except that he put less of calcium this time, the local water being too full of it.

**H**OW about his trace solution? He picked up a bottle from the top shelf of his chemical cabinet. Its contents looked just slightly off color. But he recalled only one change in that quart of trace solution. He had run out of ammonium iron citrate and substituted ferrous sulphate, which was, according to the government bulletin, just as good.

"Wait a moment," he forced himself to reflect, as the green thing grew fantastically thick in front of his eyes. "How did I obtain that ferrous sulphate?"

What was the piece of iron which he had thrown into sulphuric acid? Why, an ordinary rusty nail. Could that have something to do with—with this monstrosity?

He looked at the cactus, now five feet tall, its smooth leaves resembling somewhat *Aloë Vera*, trembling in some unfelt wind. No, it could not be a cactus, if it were related to *Aloë*. True, *Aloë* was of a liliaceas family, but—

"Oh, just a weed!" he muttered, and, impatient with the freak, he raised his sunburned hand to pull it out.

But his movement was arrested in midair. He could not do it. He could not do it because the plant trembled as if—terrified.

There was an uncanny lifelike quality in its sporadic trembling. Its long, rounded leaves seemed to cringe as if afraid of a death blow. It was mortal fear and not tropical breeze which made those green limbs tremble.

"All right, you live!" Vic Widmer nodded at the giant weed.

Then he began to review again, step by step, his latest application of chemicals.

He walked up and down his large slat house which covered almost all of the worthless, filled-in plot behind the general store of Ed Sacker who had sold this "soilless farm" to him. Now and then he would absent-mindedly pick up a pebble and finger it, while trying to reason out what



caused the strange weed to grow so supernaturally fast.

Suddenly he stopped in his tracks as he recalled something. That had not been an ordinary nail he had dissolved in sulphuric acid the day before. It had been a horseshoe nail. A very rusty one, and unusually small.

He remembered how he had come by it. He had been digging and digging before he proved to himself that the land was worthless. He had found nothing but rubbish, covered superficially by a thin layer of muck. The muck obviously had been carted from the lowlands. There was no muck in this section of Palmico.

Among other rubbish he had struck a horseshoe, then another, and still another. One after one they had protruded from the refill, like relics of some stampede of domesticated horses gone suddenly wild. He had wondered at the time where all those horseshoes had come from.

**H**IS thoughts were abruptly cut short by a loud voice.

"Well, Vic, how about that last month installment?"

He turned with dismay toward the stocky figure of his creditor, Ed Sacker.

"But you promised to wait a few weeks more," he protested. "I haven't had a case for months!"

Sacker smirked with frank disbelief.

"I read the papers, Mr. Widmer. Your brilliant defense of Farmer Grant—"

Widmer's sunny brown eyes were suddenly clouded.

"I did not get paid for that. Grant had no money. His farm was foreclosed just before he killed that man!"

He fairly spat the last words. At that moment he knew how that poor wretch had felt when he had killed his man, because he, himself, felt like killing his land owner.

Sacker seemed to read his thoughts.

"You enjoyed defending that murderer, eh? Always siding with the underdog. It sounds fine—only you 'humanitarians' seldom pay your debts. Too busy saving humanity."

It was a continuation of the intermittent argument in which the two men had indulged for the past three years. A strange animosity had sprung between them, ever since Sacker had sold Widmer that worthless lot.

"I hate to pay for such a dump!" Widmer snapped. "You cheated me!"

Sacker looked around at the enormous vines of *chayotes* twining all over the slat house. Wonder mixed with envy was in his sloe, shoe-button eyes, as they noticed the heavy, jade green fruit like corrugated pears, mixing with ruby-red tomatoes, ripe long before their season.

"Worthless land! Why, this soil grows everything! I wish I had never sold it to you! I could use a few bushels of those *chayotes* and 'ripes' right now, in my store."

"If it's a hint, pick all you want. Shall we call it interest on the payment?"

Widmer tried to be conciliatory. There was no use antagonizing the richest merchant in town. Sacker nodded, reluctantly.

"Just where did you get the fill for this lot?" Widmer asked, trying to veer the conversation into safer channels, and also to satisfy his curiosity. "I found so many horseshoes in it that—"

"In Banana Grove," was the prompt reply. "There used to be an old smithy there."

"But the shoes were so small—as if they belonged to that prehistoric horse. . . . What was it called?"

Sacker did not know and he did not care. Science did not interest him. He was so ignorant that he did not even know how Vic Widmer grew his wonderful vegetables and flowers. He thought that it was he who had the worst of the bargain. In some unexplained way, his land had turned out to be fertile. Perhaps his buyer had dug deeper than the rubbish, into some unusually fertile subsoil.

"You're lucky you got this lot from me!" he stated covetously.

Widmer lost his patience.

"Listen, you ignorant cracker! Your soil has nothing to do with my garden. I've tried to tell you again and again, but you're too full of your profit and



loss thoughts. This piece of land won't grow a palmetto shrub! It was scraped clean by that nursery man who rented it from you before I came here. He sold the top soil for lawns. The sub-soil is entirely coral rock, with a few pot holes. There is a few inches of rubbish on top of that. Every time I want to plant something, I have to scrape that rubbish, and substitute clean pebbles, to support the roots of my plants, because that rock has too much lime. That is easier than growing them entirely in water made fertile by chemicals."

"What do I care how you grow them?" snapped Sacker. "They grow here, that's all I know. You got a wonderful farm right at the back of my store. And I have to drive a truck to the interior to get vegetables to sell."

**S**TILL muttering his envious thoughts aloud, Sacker lumbered away.

"And I'd be much obliged to get paid by the end of the month, or I'll start foreclosure proceedings," were his last threatening words.

Cooling off his impotent anger with difficulty, Widmer resumed the trend of his interrupted thoughts. The nail came from horseshoes. . . . The horseshoes had come from Banana Grove. . . . Perhaps some seed, unknown to him, had clung to that prehistoric horseshoe?

But the old smithy was not prehistoric; only old-fashioned. Widmer tried to curb his imagination. Besides, no seed could live in sulphuric acid. His line of reasoning was wrong, entirely wrong.

He sighed and resumed his pacing. As he came near the curious plant, he saw slight protuberances on its smooth long leaves. Like *Aloe Vera*, the plant had no branches. Its leaves came out of the ground, in a rosette formation. What if the thing were about to bloom?

Even as he examined the bumps closer, they swelled, and began to open. No sooner did he glimpse a bright spot on the top of the largest bud than it burst open and disclosed a great blue flower heavily fringed

with smaller petals which looked like lashes of a great blue eye.

Another, and still another flower opened, until all the plant seemed an Argus looking at him with its hundred imploring eyes. And Vic Widmer could have sworn that there was intelligence in them!

He attempted to touch one of the blooms and, like an eye poked at, it closed instantly. Widmer laughed uneasily.

"So you are related to mimosas! All right, I won't touch. But, look here, even mimosas can be tamed!"

He was instantly self-conscious about his little speech. This is what came of being too fond of one's hobby. A man talking to his plants! A tableau from an insane asylum.

Still, he reflected, even such a conservative writer as Hyatt Verill maintained that plants, sensitive to human touch, can be tamed. Widmer recalled a description of a mimosa from Verill's book on "Wonder Plants And Plant Wonders." Verill would touch it gently every morning, until the plant in some mysterious way, came to know him and no longer closed its leaves under the familiar touch. Then, as his friend "tamed" another plant of the mimosa family, that one must have considered Verill a stranger, for it closed instantly, as soon as the dismayed writer touched it.

"I'll try to tame this strange weed!" Vic Widmer resolved.

He returned to the far end of the slat house where the cactuslike stranger grew. Great drops of dew hung now on its blue flowers.

"First, I must give it a name." He thought for a moment, then remembered: "Louette." A pretty name. The name of his creditor's youngest daughter.

"We'll call you Louette," he said aloud, and attempted to touch one of the flowers. It closed, spilling a few drops of dew.

"Now, now, don't cry!" he said jocularly. "Louette, I mean to tame you. Don't close your eyes, my dear."

"Hey, what are you doing here!" The thundering voice was Sacker's. "Sneaking here to see that good-for-nothing—"



He barged in, looking all around, everywhere.

"Where's my daughter?" he demanded.

"You're insane," Vic Widmer said without animosity. "She never comes here. I'm talking to my plants."

"You're nuts!" Sacker retorted, after a long and fruitless search. "Talking to plants! Tomatoes! And you thinking you're a lawyer!"

**B**EFORE he turned to go, he laid his heavy, somewhat shaking hand on the young man's shoulder.

"If I catch you and her, ever, I'll beat up both of you!"

He left with his abnormally heavy, rolling gait.

Widmer sat down on the upturned orange crate, and stared at the cedar sawdust covering the slat house floor. The sun rays, filtering through the cypress slats, twined with vines, threw intricate tapestry of shadows under his feet. Orchids, suspended from the ceiling, swung in the faint breeze. Mocking birds sang lustily somewhere on a telegraph wire.

But he was hardly aware of his surroundings. He was lost in thought, staring, without seeing them, at his sunburned bare legs, inadequately protected by the abbreviated shorts in which he usually worked. A big, harmless spider crawled up his left calf. Even if he had seen it, he would not have bothered to shake it off. He was used to the multitudinous Florida insects.

He reflected unhappily about the mess he had made of his young life so far. Three years out of the State University, and no practice to speak of. The large, home-made sign: "Victor Widmer, Attorney-at-law," nailed over his combination office and living quarters, attracted less attention from the passersby than the riotous vegetation fairly bursting out of his slat house on the back lot.

And he had tried to be so sensible and practical. He had known how hard it was for a young lawyer to establish practice in a large city so, after graduating, he had moved to Palmico. He knew that it would take time, even here, so he had learned

how to grow plants without soil.

Wild orchids were his only indulgence. All the rest were useful vegetables; things to eat. He managed to sell some of his incredibly grown produce, too. Still, he had not been able to make ends meet.

The roof leaked badly. If he neglected it, it might rot, after another rainy season. As to that overdue payment, he had no earthly hope of meeting it. Sacker would foreclose all right. No pity to be expected from that quarter!

He was still mulling over it unhappily, supporting his dark, curly head on his closed fist when he felt something sticking to his leg.

He glanced down and saw the spider. But it was not the spider's legs which clung to his bronzed skin. The spider scuttled down, then stopped, as if paralyzed. A thin, sticky feeler was closing around its sand-colored body that was marked with a white cross.

Young Widmer's glance traveled in the direction of that extended feeler, and rested on his weird weed. He surveyed it with wide-eyed wonder, for Louette had grown a new set of flowers!

They were oddly shaped, much larger than the first ones, and of a different color. Dirty white, mottled with purplish veins. They had deep, carvinorous-looking throats, like those of the giant Florida flycatcher. Long, thin feelers grew out of those grotesque flower centers. It was one of them which tugged now at the hapless spider.

Soon it withdrew, dragging with it the body of the spider which disappeared into the flower throat. The flower then closed, in the usual manner of the flycatcher's bloom, while the other set of flowers grew still bluer and clearer, like the serene eyes of a well fed human.

By now, Widmer was past gasping. He did not want to live in the state of suspended wonderment, he wanted to know. With fierce effort he concentrated again on the interrupted problem of Louette's origin.

Where was he, when Sacker had come barging in bothering him



with those immediate, practical demands? Oh, yes, the horseshoes. The horseshoes that had come from Banana Grove.

Banana Grove. . . . What was that peculiar news about the Grove which he had read about awhile ago? Oh, yes, on the night of the shooting stars, when the sky had been full of those celestial fireworks, a small meteorite had fallen by the former smithy and broken into fragments. Souvenir hunters had picked them up, but some sharp pieces had dug themselves deeply into the soft muck.

He jumped up and passed his long, calloused fingers through his dark chestnut curls. Now he understood! That meteorite fragment! Was it in the fill on his lot?

He now remembered finding a curious pebble among the rubbish next to that nail. Like a fool, he had stuck it into a pile of other pebbles supporting the roots of his plants, without investigating how such a pebble got among those soft coral rocks. If he were a real scientist and not an amateur, he might have known that it was geologically alien to the subsoil of that section of the country.

He bent and peered under Louette's leaves, now spreading contentedly like the limbs of a sleek, green octopus.

Yes, here it was, that sharp pebble which now he had no doubt had fallen from the sky.

A fragment of meteorite! A strange seed or embryo of some live organism must have clung to it, and sprouted here, awakened by the powerful chemicals which abnormally speeded its growth!

He straightened and looked down at the would-be *Aloë*. He did not need to bend much now, for it was nearly as high as he. The new carnivorous flowers were opened again, the darkly purple maws yawning hungrily. In spite of his plausible explanation of the phenomenon, he shuddered involuntarily. The plant was a cannibal! What if it grew too large to control? What if it ceased to content itself with insects?

"So what?" he pacified his nervous uneasiness. "The plant can't walk.

It won't eat me, unless I come too close."

As if in answer to that, Louette moved. Its roots seemed to stir from the ground, withdrawing, like powerful claws of some bird of prey, tangled into a dark net. With mounting fear, Vic Widmer realized that there was nothing to hold the plant except loose pebbles.

They were piled loosely, on purpose, to provide good drainage so the plants would not be overdosed with the chemical solution which might kill as well as feed them. Widmer snatched the quart bottle which held trace solution.

"If I give you more than the usual dose of this, you die!" he said, threateningly shaking the bottle before the flower eyes of his weird plant. It could see—he was certain of that!

"It must be some unknown form of animated life, unknown at least on our planet," he thought. "A half-plant, half-animal, endowed with some intelligence."

His scientific curiosity still stronger than his fear, he watched avidly how the plant would react to his threat. What he saw made him drop the bottle. The great jade limbs shook as if with helpless terror. The gentian-blue flowers opened still wider, looking imploringly into young Widmer's own. Those eyes hypnotized him into pity.

"All right, you live!" he repeated.

Only this time it was not a jocular expression. He felt as if he had spared a dangerous enemy. But was it an enemy?

**I**T LOOKED at him now with an adoring expression, with softness. So a bottle-fed cub might look at the human who raised it. Well, wasn't Louette a bottle-fed creature? He no longer called it a plant, even in his thoughts.

But how had the embryo survived the terrific heat while the meteorite was falling to earth? Widmer paused, then shrugged off this barrier to his hypothesis. How does a grain of wheat survive centuries of drought within a pyramid? For thousands-year-old wheat had germinated after



being removed from the forgotten granaries of Egypt. Was it too much to surmise that other planets have high-heat-resistant seeds?

For it must have been a seed, and not an animal embryo that had produced Louette. Widmer tried to cling to this explanation because that other one, about half-plant and half-human was too grotesque to endure calmly. That disturbed pile of pebbles? They must have been loosened by the plant's rapid growth.

He came over to Louette, heaped more pebbles around those protruding roots. Then he fell to calculating about them. Remembering tumbleweed and rose of Sharon, he no longer felt surprised even at the possibility of this plant walking. Several earthly plants withdrew their roots from the parched soil and tumbled in the direction of the wind, at times covering enormous distances. Then, when a rain fell, while they were resting on fertile soil, they would root again and begin to grow, burrowing into the soft loam. Nothing could be more natural than that.

Comforted by those speculations, he returned to the consideration of his own immediate problem, that of food. He was broke, stone broke. And he was tired of eating nothing but vegetables. He longed for a good juicy steak, or perhaps, fried chicken.

What made him think of chicken? It seemed that he smelled its tantalizing odor right in the slat house. He turned his head in the imaginary smell's direction. And it had not been imagination, sharpened by hunger! Here was Louette, the real Louette, his creditor's daughter, by the door of the slat house, gnawing at a chicken bone.

"Want some?" she asked shyly, stretching toward him a small, dimpled hand which held a piece of golden brown chicken, half wrapped in a lettuce leaf.

"Louette! I told you not to come here! Your father—"

The girl laughed lightly, her golden eyes narrowing mischievously, her cheeks growing still pinker in her embarrassment.

"She can't be more than sixteen,"

Widmer thought. "Just a kid. I mustn't scold her."

He accepted the offer of the delicious meat with unconcealed gratitude. It was sweet of the kid to bother. Especially after what her father had said.

"But please go now, Miss Sacker," he urged. "Your father said he might beat us both up if—"

She grew suddenly serious.

"Don't call me Miss, Vic. We played marbles together. Did you outgrow me so much, since you became a lawyer?"

"A lawyer!" he mimicked bitterly. "I'm a nobody. A would-be. A stark failure!"

Her sympathy for him was greater than her timidity. Comfortingly, she laid her hand on his bare shoulder.

"I know your troubles. Father threatens to foreclose. Why don't you offer to work for him for the payments? He needs a delivery man just now."

Vic Widmer jumped at the opportunity. That was an idea! The kid was much more practical than he, with his interplanetary dreams.

"I'll do that!" he exclaimed. "Thanks for the tip! And now, run along, little lady!"

**H**HE BENT and lightly kissed the hand still resting on his shoulder. At the same moment he heard what sounded like hissing. He glanced around. No, it was just pebbles falling. But these pebbles were falling from the hill that supported the weird weed's roots!

One of the roots, which he had just covered before Louette's visit, was now bare, looking more than ever like a bird's leg with claws!

He heaved a sigh. It was fortunate that the real Louette had left promptly. For how could he have explained to her this unnamed monstrosity and make it sound logical?

He knew now. He knew as well as he knew his name. The plant could walk!

Without thinking, he grabbed a piece of rope lying by the slat house door, and tied the heavy green limbs together, to a corner slat house post.



"Now stand still, like a good plant," he said grimly.

That night he could not sleep, wondering how to ask Sacker for the job, without showing too much humility. And through his bread and butter worry, a persistent thought recurred—how was the tied down plant, Louette?

The moon was too bright for sleep, anyhow. Widmer reflected with bitterness that he was too poor even to buy the much needed shades for the house. After tossing awhile longer, he got up and went out into the slat house.

Louette was gone!

Well, he should have known that. The rope was severed as if by acid. That carnivorous what-was-it must have reached for it with one of its feelers and put it into its—should he say "mouth?" For what else could he call that veined purplish flower which could eat insects and digest ropes?

"Its saliva must be terribly potent," he reflected, trying to subdue some nameless terror the thought aroused.

Related to a tumbleweed or an animal, the thing was moving voluntarily, walking in the night, there was no doubt about it. Or, perhaps, it had been stolen by some curiosity seeker, familiar with his experiments.

He would sleep on that. No use imagining grotesque things in the middle of the night.

But in the morning, when he went to water his plants with the semi-weekly feeding solution, Louette was in her place, blue flowers opened demurely, diamondlike dewdrops on the lashes.

Vic Widmer stood stockstill. Was he going insane? Why, he was now thinking about that weed in terms of a human being!

He sat by it on his rough potting bench, trying once more to reason out the puzzle. Must the inhabitants of other planets necessarily fall into those well defined earthly categories of animals and plants? Why even here there existed half-animal, half-plant beings—on evolution's lowest scale. Even today. That algae, for instance, which clogged his fish pool. But then, this plant-animal which he

had raised unwittingly seemed to possess superhuman intelligence. How else could it understand his threats, uttered in human language?

"Babies and animals understand when we threaten them," he said to himself, trying to steady his tottering reason. "Why shouldn't a stranger, an intelligent stranger from another planet? Why, this poor weed, this poor monster baby must feel terrible here, all alone." He managed to soften his growing terror with pity.

Just then he heard Sacker bellowing at the door.

"Come out here, you murderer!"

**H** E GOT up from the bench, wrapping his cotton bathrobe closer about him.

"What's happened now?" he asked angrily.

"Come out, or I'll call the police! It's your damned plant!"

Hurriedly Widmer shrugged off his bathrobe and donned a pair of overalls. Then he rushed toward his adversary who brandished a gun.

"The thing stung me when I fought it!" he declared. "Come on into the house, before I blow your brains out, you hexer!"

Still uncomprehending what caused such high rage, Widmer followed Sacker into his home. Rich as he was, the cracker still lived over his general store.

In a gabled room, on the unmade bed, lay Louette, pale as the sheets that covered her. On her throat were greenish, muddy marks.

"That plant—your damned weed—it tried to strangle my girl!" Sacker sputtered, in renewed rage.

Vic Widmer was stunned. The explanation of this uncanny assault came to him in a flash. The plant was jealous!

Slowly, as one in a cataleptic dream, he walked down the uncarpeted steps, followed by Sacker who prodded him on with his revolver. Once outside, he tried to remonstrate with the furious father.

"Mr. Sacker, I did not know what a monster I had grown. I'll kill it! Louette can't be badly hurt. I saw her smiling just before we left. May-



be it was just a hoax on her part? A schoolgirl's prank? Are you sure she isn't just pretending?"

Even as he was saying this, he knew that he was wrong.

"Listen, you nut!" shouted Sacker. "For some damn fool reason Louette likes you. She pleaded with me to give you a job. She wouldn't joke in such a way. She was in a faint when we found her. That witch-plant of yours must have thought her dead!"

"But, Sacker, for heaven's sake, you don't think that a plant—"

"I don't think! I know! Kill that thing right away—now! Pull it out by the roots!"

Sad as he felt at the thought of destroying this plant being from an alien planet, Widmer steeled himself to do it. Once more he picked up the half-torn rope. This time he made a noose at the frayed end of it.

"I'll help you!" Sacker snapped, pocketing his gun.

The men walked into the slat house in cautious silence, stealthily, as if stalking a dangerous, escaped beast.

But the would-be executioners were too late. The small hill of disturbed pebbles, still emanating the odor of feeding chemicals, was empty. Louette the plant—or was it Louette, the animal?—had disappeared.

"Where is it?" Sacker asked.

"I—it withered, and I threw it away," Widmer quickly lied. "I tried to tell you but you were too excited to listen."

A few days later, on a windy day, a colored gardener in the region of Lake Okeechobee saw a giant cactus-like weed moving swiftly toward Big Cypress Swamp. The Negro swore that the plant used its roots as legs.

But swear to his story as he would, nobody believed him. Except Vic Widmer. And he kept his thoughts to himself. What if some day the run-away plant should come back?

## TIGER! TIGER!

(Concluded from page 88)

piece, smashed to a pulp. Seems like old Brewster is driving home late in the night from Meadville and he run over the cat. He says it came tearing down the road lickety-split and he couldn't turn the wheel away in time. The damn thing seemed half crazy. Front tire mashed its head right to a pulp—and I'm someway not sorry."

"Then she's dead!" Jason sighed. "Thanks." He looked about him and laughed shortly. "Guess I won't miss her any!"

"She?" Caleb Healey repeated, puzzled. "But that there yellow critter

was a tom-cat, Billy, its name was. Say—dern if I ain't nearly fergot! How 'bout dinner tonight? Carrie an' young Kate. . . ."

"You bet!" Jason nodded. "I'll be there."

He watched the flapping, ancient Model-T disappear around a bend of the road. Then he turned and went cheerfully back toward the house.

The worn clapboards needed clean paint. And he'd plough up the weeds and seed the front lawn. Everything was going to be all right. The dead would be forever dead.

*A Florida Swamp Witch Shows Old Jacob Wolski the Road to Glory When His Country Needs a Savior in*

# I AM GOING TO CRACOW!

By MARIA MORAVSKY

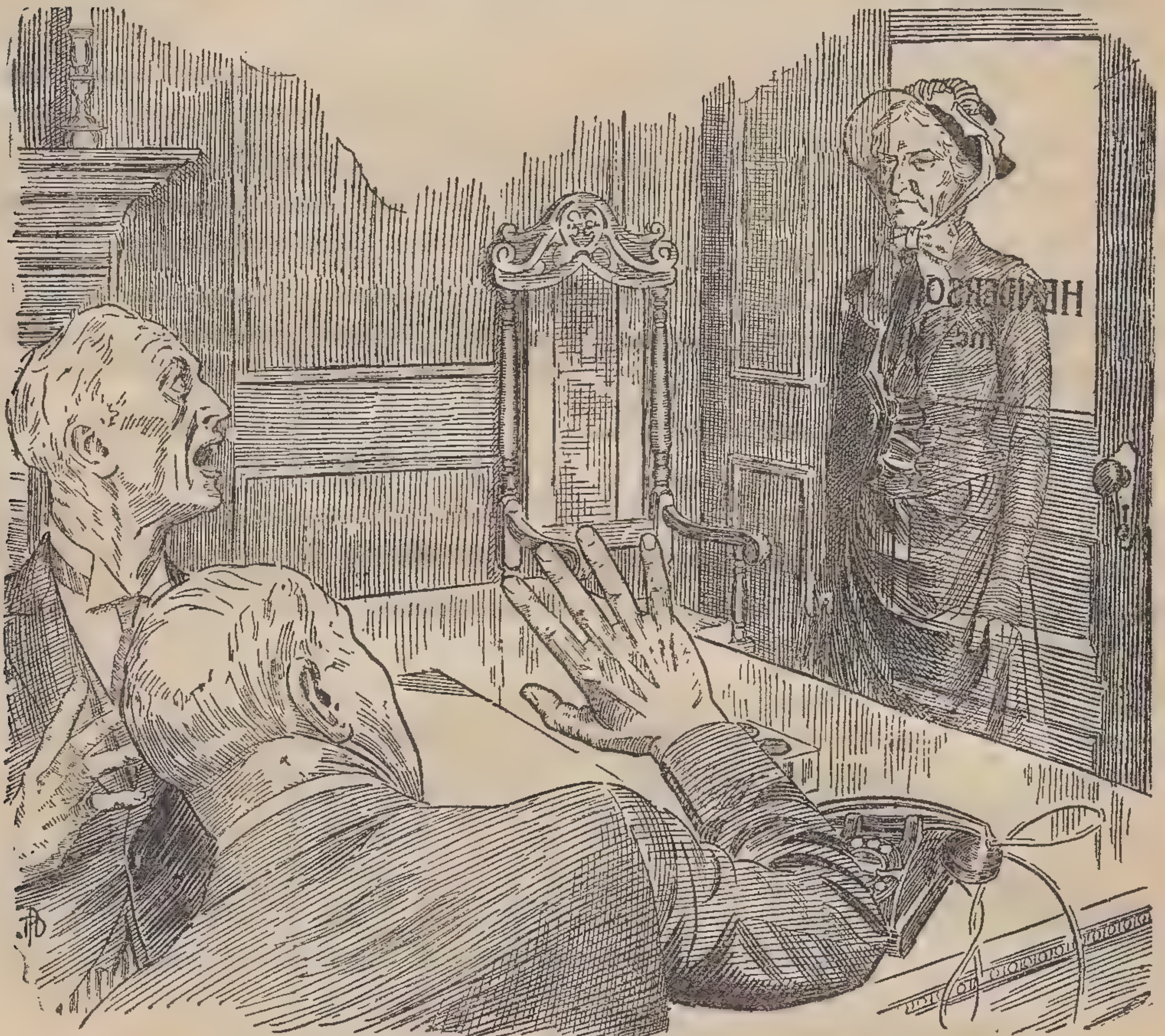
NEXT ISSUE



# After You, Mr. Henderson

AUGUST W. DERLETH

*Author of "A Message for His Majesty," "Memoire for Lucas Payne," etc.*



The reversed lettering showed distinctly through her

**T**HE name in gold-leaf on the door was simply "Henderson, Inc." But there was history behind that simple title, fifty years of sterling business reputation. Even the suite of offices had that air of solidity and mellowed affluence which was the firm's only advertisement.

For the first thirty of those fifty years Enoch and Joshua Henderson

---

*Defy Not the Dead, for Forces  
Stronger than Annihilation May  
Keep them from Resting in Peace!*

---

guided the destiny of the brokerage business. For the past twenty, Latichia, daughter of Enoch, and Lucas and Eliot, sons of Joshua, had been in



control. Rather, Latichia had been in control, with Lucas and Joshua as lesser satellites. It had been this way until the past few days. But now Latichia, that spry and energetic little spinster of a senior partner, was critically ill.

Mr. Lucas Henderson, a pleasant smile on his lean features, entered the offices this morning at the unprecedented hour of nine o'clock. Although the opening of the exchange was still an hour away, he found his brother already there before him. Eliot, being fat and jovial, could smile more expansively than his tall and thin brother. He did so now.

"Well?" he asked in his cultured, well modulated voice.

"She is dying," informed Lucas, removing his hat and topcoat in the manner of one performing a sacred ritual.

"How long?" inquired Eliot gently.

"I think within an hour or so," Lucas said judiciously.

Eliot made a small sound of sympathy with his lips, but there was a certain air of sad satisfaction about him. Both brothers were too well bred, too polite, too cultured to be anything but gentlemen. Sad though it was, people had acquired the habit of dying eventually. There was little one could do about it.

However, the removal of the guiding hand of crusty old Latichia was not without its pleasant points. Latichia's views were not progressive. Her conservative morality and finely drawn opinions of ethics had proved irksome to her cousins.

Lucas discarded sympathy with his hat and coat and came at once to business.

"Continental Investment," he said briefly.

**E**LIOT looked at him appraisingly. Without the slightest sign of bewilderment.

"As I understand your plan, we are to dump our holdings. We sell enough to force the stock below our figure, and then buy back at the low price. We stand to make a cool million by the deal."

"As well," pointed out Lucas, "as

enjoying the excitement of bearing the market."

"Providing the government regulations don't interfere."

"Under the circumstances, they won't. Henderson, Incorporated, is an old and established concern. It has never gambled in stocks. We own outright most of the shares. You and I own fifty per cent together, Latichia owns forty per cent—which we inherit upon her death—and only ten per cent is privately distributed. So don't bother your head about that. We dump the stock, at the same time passing the word around that Henderson is selling. Unless I am sadly in error regarding the prestige of our name, Continental will hit the chutes. When it drops to, say, sixty or fifty, we will buy it back in."

Eliot pursed his lips. "To force such results, we'll have to sell short."

"On good security—Latichia's forty per cent."

"Latichia wouldn't like it," said Eliot, trying to be deliberate. "She would call it downright dishonest."

"So it is," agreed Lucas affably. "But Latichia is rapidly losing interest in sordid finance and mundane affairs. I've always wanted to have a flutter like this. Latichia, however, has always made it impossible. You needn't join me in this, Eliot, but I must have a free hand. There are six hundred thousand shares of Continental, three hundred thousand of which we directly control. With Latichia's two hundred thousand, we can't fail!"

"Of course I am with you, Lucas," endorsed Eliot. "Instruct our agent to start dumping as soon as trading opens. I'll pay my last respects to Latichia. Incidentally, I'll make sure you know what you're talking about."

Miss Latichia had always been an indomitable woman. The approach of death in no way lessened the sharpness of her manner. If Eliot expected her hawklike nose to have shrunk, her snapping black eyes to have dimmed, or her sharp voice to have lost any of its acid harshness, he was disappointed. The old lady even anticipated his carefully prepared words of sympathy.



"Don't feed me pap, Eliot," she said. "I've got under an hour to lie here alive, and I want to tell you just what I told Lucas."

**Y**OUNG HENDERSON bowed deferentially and sat down.

"I know very well you'll be relieved to have the reins taken away, but I must give you a bit of parting advice before I die. I told Lucas before, and I will tell you now—if you know what you're about (though you never did) you'll liquidate the firm immediately.

"Despite your illusions, neither of you has sense enough to preserve the standing of Henderson, Incorporated. It's always been my principle that that standing must never decline. Our fathers made that name, and its reputation must not be stained. I should prefer to see control of our various major holdings pass to Princeton & Valisch.

"I want to caution you particularly about Continental Investment. As you know, this is a federal subsidiary, and should anything happen, to it, our government may be seriously embarrassed not only in this country but abroad. You will do me this last courtesy and give these matters your every consideration. You may be sure that I shall hold on as long as I can.

"That's all. You may go now, for it tires me a little to talk. Our firm's dealings will enable both you and Lucas to retire on a most comfortable and satisfactory income. Good-by, Eliot."

"Good-by, Letty," said Eliot. "I'm sorry."

"Nonsense," she said.

In the hall, Eliot met the doctor.

"I understand Miss Henderson has but an hour or so to live," he said confusedly. "She seemed quite animated just now. I had expected to find her considerably weaker than she is."

"That indicates nothing," said the doctor. "She is suffering from acute pulmonary oedema. She'll be dead within an hour. At the very most, two hours."

Eliot took out his watch and looked at it.

"Before trading begins," he mur-

mured, nodding his head in mournful satisfaction.

"Of course," put in the doctor hastily, "news of her death will be kept from the public until after the exchange closes."

"Yes, certainly," said Eliot.

When he came into the firm's offices, he was all but rubbing his hands.

"It's all right," he declared to Lucas. "She's dying. I saw the doctor."

"I suppose she took the opportunity to tell you how incompetent we are," said Lucas.

"Oh, certainly," Eliot replied. "Fortunately, though, I have every confidence in our ability."

"My only regret is that Letty can't be here to see us clean up," Lucas declared. "She always had a poor opinion of our business acumen."

The brothers ceremoniously shook hands.

**A**T PRECISELY ten o'clock, the doleful old servant of Miss Latichia Henderson telephoned to advise that his mistress had just passed away.

At the same minute, a dozen brokers began to sell Continental Investment. At ten-five, the first break came when Continental wavered uncertainly and dropped to 98. At ten-thirty-five, Lucas Henderson let it be known that the firm of Henderson, Incorporated, was dumping Continental. The result was that the stock slumped at once to 78. By eleven o'clock, Continental had slipped further to 72, and by twelve-fifty it was down to 59.

The reports of the ticker were highly gratifying to the surviving partners.

"Will it go much lower?" wondered Eliot.

"I think not," said Lucas. "Buying is desultory, naturally. There must be close to five hundred thousand shares in the market now. I'll give orders to start buying promptly at two o'clock. There should be nearly the entire six hundred thousand shares available when we start buying."

"Which will make us about three hundred thousand short," observed Eliot.

"Correct," agreed Lucas coolly. "Letty's two hundred thousand shares



will make up two-thirds of the deficiency. No matter what might happen, we can safely figure on buying up the remaining hundred thousand in the open market."

Eliot smiled. "I think it might be safe for us to go out to lunch."

"I think it might," nodded Lucas pleasantly, arising and putting on his hat. He halted politely at the door of their private office.

"After you, Mr. Henderson," said the younger brother, bowing.

Immaculate in gloves, hats, with canes and sphinxlike faces, the brothers Henderson went to lunch. They showed only an academic interest in the shouting of newsboys about the upset in Continental Investment and the rumor of governmental concern. It was not quite two o'clock when a fellow member of the exchange came in, saw them, and stopped at their table.

"So here you are," he said. "Calmly eating, too. What the devil have you fellows been doing in Continental? I never saw anything drop like that and then go skyrocketing the same day."

"Skyrocketing?" echoed the brothers Henderson simultaneously. Lucas gaped at his watch.

"Yes," said the newcomer. "Don't pretend ignorance to me. It looks like you and that old termagant of a cousin of yours finally got together and 'rigged' the market."

For the first time in their lives, the brothers Henderson were discourteous. They left their companion, the waiter, and their check flat as they scurried out of the restaurant. They were back in their offices in three minutes.

On the ticker, Continental stood at 109½.

Cold sweat popping out all over him, Lucas grabbed the telephone and called his brokers. Had they bought at the beginning of the upturn? They had not. The explicit instructions had been to wait until two o'clock. Besides, Miss Latichia Henderson was on the floor personally supervising and directing Henderson purchases, so who were mere brokers to interfere?

"What?" yelled Lucas, forgetting

even his culture for the moment. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"Miss Latichia Henderson is on the floor of the exchange right now," answered the broker angrily. "What kind of doublecross are you Hendersons trying to pull? We—"

LUCAS never heard the rest of the complaint. Pale as his own shirt front, he put down the instrument and turned to the trembling Eliot.

"Somebody's stark mad," he whispered. "Daggett said that—that Latichia is on the floor—*right now*—buying up every scrap of Continental."

For a ruddy-faced fat man, Eliot looked mighty green.

"But—but that's impossible!" he protested. "Letty is dead!"

"Unless Letty or her doctor or somebody has thrown us a bad curve," said Lucas, wiping his clammy forehead with a hand that trembled violently.

Eliot grabbed the phone, dialed the brokerage office.

"Buy Continental!" he shouted as soon as he heard Daggett's voice. "Buy! Tell 'em all to buy for Henderson!"

He replaced the transceiver, then grabbed it up again and dialed furiously. Lucas started out of the office at a run.

"I'm calling the doctor now," Eliot said. "Where are you going?"

"To the mortuary," Lucas flung over his shoulder.

The physician claimed Eliot's ear. "Certainly," he snorted in reply to the frenzied questioning. "Miss Latichia died at nine-fifty-five this morning. I was present, and I signed the death certificate. Of course I'm sure! What's the matter with you?"

It was less than an hour when Lucas came back. His face was whitely scared and puzzled.

"She's in the embalming room, stiff as a poker," he announced. "This is a hoax," he added without conviction.

"A bad one then," answered Eliot. "Daggett couldn't buy a single share. He just called back. This will clean us out, Lucas."



"Hardly that bad," said Lucas. "We're coming into control of Letty's two hundred thousand shares. But we may lose that extra hundred thousand sold short."

They strode over and looked at the ticker. Continental stood firm at 160. There was a tap at the door, and Phineas Princeton, of Princeton and Valisch, walked in.

"GOOD afternoon, gentlemen," he said icily. "I took the liberty of walking right in."

"Good afternoon," answered the brothers Henderson glumly.

"I'm afraid I have some very bad news for you," said Phineas Princeton. "I tried to get hold of you on the telephone repeatedly this morning, but you were apparently too busy to reply, and most of the time I could not get through. I am creditably informed that you have sold six hundred thousand shares of Continental Investment this morning and early afternoon. A reprehensible dumping, gentlemen, particularly when you consider that three hundred thousand of these are shares you do not even own. In other words, you sold short some three hundred thousand shares at the deplorably average figure of seventy-four and a quarter."

"I fail to understand your connection, Mr. Princeton," said Lucas Henderson firmly. "Latichia's holdings will pretty well cover us."

Phineas Princeton smiled frigidly. "Miss Latichia telephoned us from her home, at one o'clock, to buy all of Continental. We have bought into absolute control. You are in our debt for something approximating two million dollars."

"As to your cousin's holdings, I am instructed to inform you that we held a private meeting at her home last night. Princeton and Valisch took over her two hundred thousand shares in accordance with her wish that we assume control of Henderson's principle holdings. At this moment Princeton and Valisch own five hundred and eight-seven thousand shares of Continental Investment. We shall expect your check to cover in the morning's mail. Good day."

The door closed behind him. For a long moment there was no sound in the room. Then Lucas raised his eyes and looked at his brother.

"We are wiped out, Mr. Henderson," he said gravely. "It is a bad dream."

"We are ruined, Mr. Henderson," corrected Eliot. "It is a nightmare."

A dry cackle of a well remembered laugh impinged on their eardrums. They looked toward the office door with simultaneous starts. There, between them and the door, the reversed lettering of "Henderson, Inc." showing distinctly through her, stood Miss Latichia Henderson.

Not as material as they had always seen her, nevertheless she seemed just as powerful and dominant. Sternly, she stood there, a slender little old figure in gray, a sort of misty gray, old-fashioned poke-bonnet cocked a little to one side, fingerless black gloves covering her veined hands.

"Latichia!" cried the brothers Henderson.

"What's left of me," she answered with a sniff of disapproval. She shook the ghostly umbrella she habitually carried. "You idiots tried to put one over on the name of Henderson—on me, didn't you? Fools! I warned you both this morning. Now you can't raise two million dollars, even by liquidating, can you?"

The culprits were too spellbound to answer. Frozen in horrified awe, they stood rooted, quaking. Miss Latichia cackled again.

"Just a pair of smirking and scraping nincompoops—as always," she said in her ghostly yet clearly distinct voice. "But the name of Henderson still remains untarnished by sharp dealings. There is only one way out for you, you polite hypocrites. Good-by. I'll see you later."

Before their straining eyes, the wraith of Miss Latichia floated rather than walked over to the nearest window. It drifted daintily out like a puff of cigar smoke in a draft.

For another long moment there was terrified, incredulous silence.

"Did—did you see her, Eliot?" whispered Lucas between dry lips.

(Concluded on page 112)



# Power of the Druid

By  
**ROBERT BLOCH**

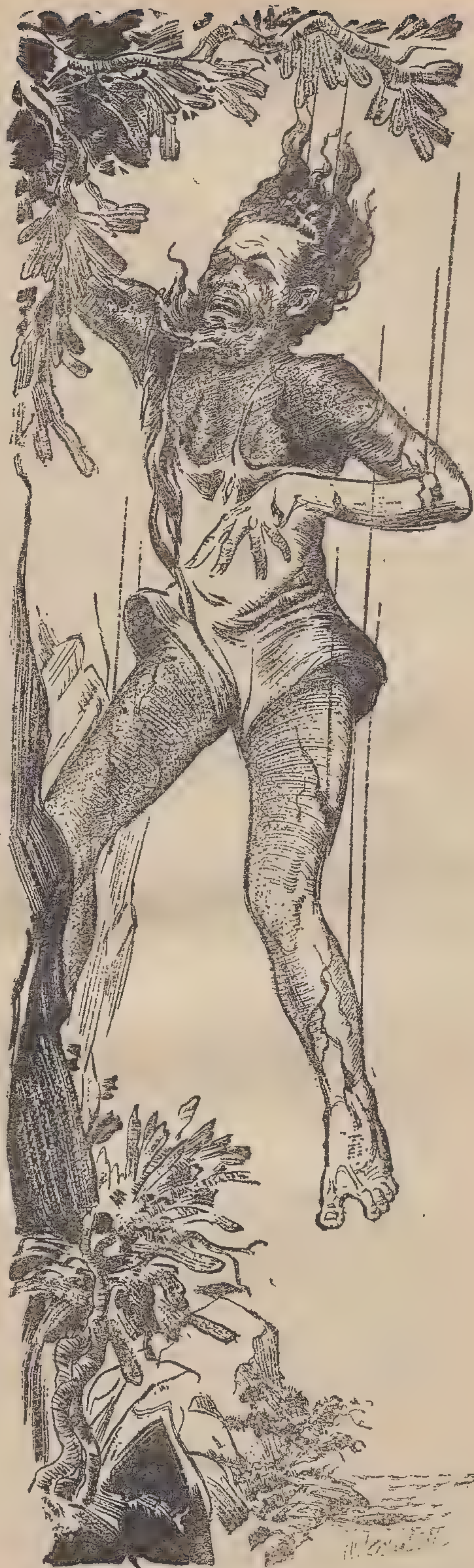
*Author of "Pink Elephants,"  
"Death Has Five Guesses," etc.*

**T**IBERIUS CLAUDIUS NERO CÆSAR was bored. His sacred Majesty, Augustus, Protector of the People, Emperor Tiberius stared moodily at the blue Caprian waters and heaved a scented sigh. He was heartily sick of living. Ten years ago he had become sick of Rome and the cares of empire. He abandoned all government at that time and retired here to Capri.

He built the twelve villas in which he lived. He peopled them with his German bodyguard, his staff of Greek professors, his friend Nerva, and the astrologer Thrasyllus—all as a safeguard against further boredom.

But he tired quickly enough of island exile, and so had come to him the loathsome Spintrians, the abominable practitioners of the arts alluded to in the book of Elephantis. And Tiberius built torture chambers in the villas, to amuse himself in still more curious ways. But now, even these strong diversions no longer titillated his aging senses.

*The Mystic Snake Gave Cruel  
Claudius Youth—But Wild  
Debauches Deafened Him  
To His Enemies' Hisses*



His body crashed, cutting off the wild madness  
of his death-cry



Tiberius could no longer escape from himself, from his own aging body and jaded senses. He was growing quite old now. A tall, bony man with a thin, pitted face and a high, bald pate. His physicians were forever at him, cautioning him against his addiction to drugged wine, and myrrh.

He sat, stiff-jointed, on the cliff overlooking the beach at Capri, alternately staring at the waves and fingering the fifth volume of *Elephantis* in his lap. He sat alone, and he cursed under his breath in round, imperial oaths.

"Cæsar!"

The harsh voice echoed from below the cliff at his feet. Tiberius sat up, his bony legs stiffening with apprehension. No strangers came to this, his island. Tiberius feared assassins.

"Cæsar!"

Peering over the edge of the cliff, the Emperor descried a boat, moored to a rock in the waters below. The voice came from the throat of someone clambering up the steep cliff, through the bushes.

Suddenly the bushes parted at one side, and a weird figure appeared. It was a disheveled man, ragged and soaking with sea water that glistened on his tanned skin. He had a wild, bearded face that bled from the scratchings of the thorny bushes, encountered during his climb. His yellow teeth were bared in a grimace of fatigue.

But Tiberius scarcely noticed these details. His eyes were focused on the long knife the stranger carried in one hand. It was a sharp knife, a glittering knife. It was the kind of blade that could be easily plunged into a neck, even an imperial neck.

Tiberius looked wildly to either side for his German guards, who always waited near by. But the man approached, grinning. And now Tiberius perceived that he carried a great sack.

"A gift for you, Majesty," panted the ragged stranger. "I caught it just now, saw you sitting here on the cliff, and wish to present you with my catch."

He smiled through his tangled beard

through his scratched, bleeding face. Opening the sack, the man drew out a great barbel, still squirming in life. The stranger gestured with his knife.

"A gift, oh Cæsar."

Tiberius did not look at the catch. His lean hands fumbled for the golden whistle on the cord about his scrawny throat. He blew frantically.

"Guards! At once!"

**F**ROM either side guards appeared. Great, blond, brawny warriors in armor, with barbs protruding from their iron helmets. They moved in, holding assegais in readiness.

"You would kill me, then, under pretext of presenting me with this object?" Tiberius sneered.

"But, Cæsar, I speak truly. I caught it only a few moments ago and brought it as a present to you, Divinity."

"The knife?" snapped Tiberius, his face set in a cold frown.

"To cut my way through the thorn bushes," wailed the fisherman.

"Rub the barbel in his face," commanded the Emperor.

In a flash, one of the Germans had pinioned the helpless rustic. Another hacked a piece from the fish and rubbed the scaly bits in the squirming man's face.

"Mercy, Cæsar!" gasped the captive.

"See what else is in the sack," Tiberius commanded.

A third German dug into the sack and drew out an enormous lobster, alive, as its great pointed pincers showed.

"Mercy, Tiberius."

"You'd frighten me, you boor?" whispered the Emperor. "Guard, rub his face with this. Rub it well."

The German advanced on the tightly-held fisherman and drew the giant lobster across his contorted face. He drew it forward and back, scrubbing.

Tiberius stood looking on.

"That's it." He smiled. "Again."

The huge pincers tore the flesh from both cheeks.

"Cæsar! Mercy—please—"

"Capital!" Tiberius cackled, his senile laughter rising. "Prove his innocence to his face, guard. Again!"



The struggling fisherman screamed, but the German drew the lobster down, pressed it tightly into the victim's face. The pincers settled into the hollow ridges of the fisherman's eyes. There was a mad shriek of pain, and the lobster came away. But its pincers were no longer empty.

The man's eye-sockets were. From their red, streaming emptiness even the Germans recoiled in horror. But Tiberius still laughed, a bleating laugh which rose even above the screams of the blinded man.

"Release him," commanded the Emperor. "You may go, loyal and faithful subject."

The blind man raced screaming about the edge of the cliff. His clawing hands clutched empty air as he tottered on the brink, then fell forward from the crag to plunge down into the rocks a hundred feet below. His body crashed, cutting off the wild madness of his death-cry. Tiberius squinted over the edge of the cliff and shrugged as he turned away.

"So," he said. "You may go, guards." His eyes lighted on the cut fish at his feet.

"Perhaps one of you will carry this to the villa," he suggested. "Tell the cook to prepare it for this evening's feast. I am fond of fresh barbel, very fond of it, and this one's a beauty. Besides, we should be ungrateful did we not enjoy the fellow's gift. He was put to such pains in the giving."

The Emperor chuckled as the Germans bowed and withdrew. Then Tiberius resumed his place at the edge of the cliff and picked up *Elephantis* once again. After a moment he sighed deeply.

For the Emperor Tiberius was bored.

**T**HE sun was sinking in the center of a cloud that hung over the western sea. It peered out from the round blackness of the cloud like the red eye of a Cyclops swimming away across the waters. And the red eye fell upon Tiberius as he turned the pages of his book, fell upon him and bathed his face with bloody light.

The night breeze was rustling in the bushes, whispering in a chill voice

of mourning that the day was dead. Tiberius felt clammy cold steal over his thin limbs, stepped briskly to the edge of the cliff for a final glance into the waters below.

"Jove's Curse!" exclaimed the emperor.

The boat of the dead fisherman was still anchored there below. But that did not disturb His August Majesty.

It was the sight of what lay beside it in the dusk. Another boat. A long, queer-looking craft was anchored there. And it had no oars, though it was plainly some sort of barbarous shell.

The rustling in the bushes took on a new and menacing meaning.

Tiberius clutched at his whistle.

The rustling was louder. Was it the ghost of the dead fisherman coming for vengeance?

Tiberius blew frantically.

And then the bushes parted.

A ragged man with a tangled beard, his face bleeding in the sunset.

It was the fisherman!

But no, the light alone caused the face to look as though it bled. And this man's beard was white. His rags were white, also, and his skin. Moreover, he had eyes.

Tiberius could not escape those eyes. They burned more redly than the sun, and with a deeper, more compelling fire. They smoldered from that face in the dusk as the man slowly advanced.

Tiberius screamed.

"Guards! *Schnell!*" He babbled frantic German commands, and still the figure approached.

The Germans appeared, running through the trees.

The man did not appear to notice them. He advanced on Tiberius, a slow smile on his face.

"Guards! Over the cliff, quickly!" the Emperor screamed.

They were on the stranger in a rush, bearing him back. He did not struggle. One of the Germans picked up the great lobster that still lay on the sand and ground it into the captive's face. It pressed pincers into his reddened eyes, but no sound came from the victim. And then they hurled him from the cliff, hurled him down



upon the rocks below, as Tiberius screamed in fear and rage.

There was a faint splashing from the beach, then stillness.

**H**IS Imperial Majesty motioned the guards away in silence, then slowly turned and followed them up the path.

The appearance of this second, frightening stranger was too much for him. Henceforth he would entertain no visitors. All would be thrown from the cliff, just as he tossed the favorites of whom he tired. Tiberius could not brook assassination. He was soon to die, and no one should hasten that horrid end.

But who was this man with the disturbing eyes?

Well, no matter. He was dead, and those red eyes were ground out forever. The wind rustled strongly at Tiberius' back. Too strongly.

The Emperor knew suddenly that he was being followed. In a panic, his hands again went to the whistle about his neck.

But other hands reached it first.

Two slim white hands rested on the cord, on the golden whistle. Two slim white hands came over his shoulders. Tiberius, speechless with fear, turned his head.

He stared into the red, burning eyes of the eyeless dead stranger he had thrown over the cliff!

"Hail, Cæsar!"

The deep voice penetrated his being, though it was soft as a whisper.

"Go away! You're dead. I killed you," Tiberius gasped. He felt that he was going mad.

"I would speak with you, Cæsar."

"Stop staring at me! You have no eyes. I killed you."

"Aye, Cæsar. You killed me, and tore out my eyes, and threw me from the cliff, just as you threw that poor fisherman earlier in the day. But I am not a fisherman, Cæsar. I cannot be blinded, or killed."

"You're his ghost," wailed the Emperor.

"Nay, I am not a ghost. But I have powers greater than the supernatural. You saw me die, and now you see me live again. Such powers should be of

interest to you, Cæsar. It was to tell you of them that I came."

"Yes."

"I allowed you to have your will, though I could blast your Germans with a glance—and I could blast you, too, Tiberius, my friend." The red eyes compelled.

"Yes, you are right. Come, be my guest at dinner tonight at the villa. We shall talk then."

**T**HE Emperor's couch was soft. The Emperor's table was filled with delicacies. The Emperor's slaves, servants, musicians, and guests were attentive and solicitous.

But the Emperor paid no heed to comfort, food, drink, or entertainment. He sat staring at the white-bearded man, his ears open only to his whispered words.

The stranger sat stiffly at the great board. He did not loll beneath the fannings of slaves, nor did he partake of the viands before him. Instead, he drank wine from the special flagon placed at his side, draught after draught of wine from the great goblet he constantly refilled. Yet never did his even tones falter. The stranger could not get drunk!

Tiberius listened long. At last he ventured a whispered reply above the chattering of the others at the table.

"You say, then, that you are a Druid who came here in a stone boat from Britain."

"Aye. I have been ovate and bard in the great Druidic college you call Stonehenge. And I was archdruid, too, of all Britain."

"I have heard of your cult. It is known throughout Britain, the Celtic isles, and even Gaul. You Druids are wizards, are you not?"

"Not wizards, but students of Nature. We worship Tanarus, the god of primal life, who dwells in the sacred oak. And we accord homage to Mabon, the white bull of the sun, and to Primal Nodens, serpent of waters.

"The true secrets of Druidism are guarded by the initiate. Only a few of the many who pass twenty years in study and trials of endurance ever manage to become admitted to our secret priesthood. One must learn



strange magics and discover the secrets of Nature in order to be worthy.

"I am one of the few true initiates. I rule over the thirteen clans of Druid, and I know the real truths behind Life and Death."

"You boast of such powers?" Tiberius sneered.

"Did I not come from Britain in a stone boat without oars?" the Druid returned with a slow smile. "Primal Nodens guided me here. Did you not kill me and tear out my eyes? Am I not therefore master over Nature and Life and Death?"

Tiberius nodded.

"But then, what would you have of me? Why did you leave your powerful offices in Britain to seek me out?"

"That, oh Cæsar, I shall explain. I tired of my leadership because of its restrictions. I am human! I have never known the love of woman, and all common men feared me for my powers, even my priests. Well, love of woman is denied me now, and friendship too. But I am still human enough to long for wealth and riches and adulation.

"I know magics that bring all riches, but dare not use them in my sacred office. If I desired any pleasures my priests would sacrifice me as a violator of my trust. So I decided to leave my post, before it was too late. And I bethought myself of the greatest man in the world—you, Emperor of Rome. I would come to you. Surely there would be a way to serve you and in return gain reward. So I came."

**A**UGUST TIBERIUS smiled, and under cover of his guests' babblings, he leaned forward to reply.

"There is a way to serve me."

The Druid smiled.

"In the spring the trees blossom and the flowers bud. They die in autumn but next year are reborn. Their life is eternal, but their forms change. And that is the secret of human existence. Life lies in the soul, and the soul moves from body to body without ceasing."

"But what has that to do with me?"

"A great deal, oh Cæsar. We of the true Druids have learned how to govern the soul, and Life. We can take

the vital force before it dies and transplant it. And you, I know, want to escape death. So, Tiberius, I can help you. I will place your soul in another body, transpose the soul of another to your own dying body. Thus you can live again."

Tiberius trembled.

The Druid took a long gulp from his wine glass.

"You cannot make me drunk, you see," he smiled. His red eyes became points. "That ought to prove something." He smiled again, staring straight at Tiberius.

"You can't even kill me."

The Druid drank deliberately again of the wine.

"What do you mean?" Tiberius quavered.

"I told you I knew all things." Again the Druid drank slowly. "And of course I know that this wine you set before me is highly poisoned. A glass of it will kill a man in half an hour. Yet I have been drinking all night." The smile was terrible.

"But Druid, I did not know, I could not suspect! If you can do what you say, if you can give me another lease on life in a new, young body, I shall reward you as richly as you desire."

Druid eyes gleamed.

"You're an evil man, Tiberius. I've never seen worse. As a Druid I should not prostitute my powers to serve you, lest I incur the vengeance of my gods. You must reward me well."

"I shall, I promise! As I love my life."

"That oath is convincing enough. Now, to find you a body."

Tiberius extended a thin finger and pointed at his nephew.

"That is the body," he murmured. "Put me in his place. That young man is to be my heir, the next Emperor of Rome. He is young, healthy. The people love him as much as they hate me. That is the body I desire to inhabit."

The Druid nodded, staring down the table at the thin, serious face of the Emperor's nephew, Gaius Caligula.

It was done!

Tiberius Cæsar returned to the mainland. At Misenum he fell sick, and



called Caligula to his side. The old man, wheezing and gasping in his bed, gave Caligula the Imperial ring.

Caligula put it on gravely, there in the darkness of the bedroom. He was alone with his imperial uncle, and he sobbed with deep emotion at the thought of this terrible old man, for all his power, dying alone and friendless after a final debauch. Where was the Druid?

But he did not sob long. And he did not wonder where the Druid was for long, either, because the white-bearded old man rose in the darkness behind the bed and advanced with blazing eyes. One hand held a staff of yew, with a serpent head.

Caligula rose from the bedside, turned.

The serpent head darted out of the Druid's hand. It hissed.

The wood hissed, and moved. A great snake coiled about the throat of Caligula, strangling his screams. The young man fell across the bed where the Emperor lay, with the snake tight against his neck.

Then, slowly, the tail of the snake rose and coiled in turn about the neck of Tiberius, who did not resist. Both men lay side by side on the bed now, the great green serpent coiled at either end about their throats. Their faces blackened.

And the Druid chanted there in the darkness over the bodies of the two dying men.

"Oh Great Typhon, Great Set, Great Nodens!" whispered the Druid. His voice slurred into Celtic, into ancient Phoenician.

The Druid whispered long, and at his words the candle flames in the chamber sickened and died. The two men died. Only the Druid and the serpent were alive—and the horrid voice, uttering strange words that somehow caused the air to tremble at their utterance.

Now, swiftly, a flame seemed to course through the wriggling coils of the serpent. It came from both ends. The one from the tail about the neck of Tiberius was a dim blue flame. The other, from the head about Caligula's throat, was a strong red flame. They met and mingled in the serpent's

body, seemed to pass and seek opposite ends.

Suddenly the candles flared up, the serpent hissed again and then uncoiled from the young firm throat and the wrinkled old throat.

Both men began to breathe once again. The young throat moved regularly, while the old one wheezed and rattled.

The serpent wriggled from the bed and retreated to the Druid's slim hands, seeming none the worse for its experience. Then, as the Druid caught it, it suddenly became a mere shaft of wood once more. The Druid smiled and turned to the bed.

"It is done," he announced.

"Yes. It is done!"

The triumphant voice of Tiberius rose—from Caligula's lips.

"What have you done?" The feeble quaver of Caligula came from Tiberius in the bed. "What has happened? Where am I?"

With renewed vitality, born of utter dread, the body of aged Tiberius sat up, and Caligula's dazed eyes stared from its face.

Caligula's body caught up a pillow. Gently Tiberius pressed it against his own former mouth, saw his own body sink back on the mattress and struggle feebly as it slowly strangled.

"Ah, it's over." The new Cæsar stood erect.

The Druid chuckled, and they left the room. The black face of Tiberius leered behind them in the darkness, its swollen tongue protruding as though in sardonic derision.

**T**HE new Emperor was announced to the people.

"Caligula! Hail the Young Emperor! Hail to the Little Boot!"

The crowds cheered lustily.

Caligula entered his private chambers while the cries of the mob still echoed from without the palace below. He paced to the windows and shut them against the clamor, then turned to face the smiling Druid.

The Druid wore velvet now, and his beard was curled and scented. Rings adorned his fingers, and the lines of fasting and privation were gone from his face. But his face held new wrin-



kles more unpleasant—wrinkles of evil about his eyes, craftiness etching his lips. His smile was no longer omniscient, merely humanly avaricious.

"Well, Cæsar?" he said. "Satisfied?"

"No." The Cæsar scowled. "This is a ghastly mess, Druid. I've leaped from bad to worse, it seems. As Tiberius, I could do what I willed, since it was expected of me. They hated and feared my every act. Therefore, I was not constrained in following my nature. But as Caligula, I have a part to play. I am a public hero. I must be good, and kind, and merciful. The weight of convention is great, Druid. I cannot escape from doing what is expected."

"Why not be good?" suggested the Druid. "If such elementary concepts as good and evil occupy your philosophy? I am giving you a new chance, a new life to live, so to speak. Why not atone?"

Cæsar laughed.

"What, Druid? Do you then prove craven?"

"Not I. Do as you like." The Druid hastily corrected himself.

"But I can't. I want my Spintrians again. By Neptune's trident, man, I have a young body again. It is fit for pleasures, and for reveling. That is why I desired my youth. But as Caligula I cannot use it without excuse."

"There is a solution," the Druid conceded.

"What? Tell me? I'm going mad with boredom."

"You could perhaps—fall sick."

"Yes."

"And when you become well you accept divinity. Your forebears did. Augustus is worshiped as a god. You can be one too, alive. The common people know that a god has different moral standards, just as Jove had in the myth. And your intimates here in the palace will accept your change as madness resulting from your sickness."

"Druid, you are right! Ah, how fortunate I am in your counsel!"

The Druid smiled.

"Sicken for a month," he advised.

Caligula was ill for a month.

When he rose again, all Rome fell sick.

The god, Caligula, reigned in a hell upon earth. Rome was his hell, and all souls felt the torment of his lordship. As a divine figure, his antics were unquestioned at the first—and then it was too late. He killed his son, and killed the old captain of his guards, substituting a figurehead he could easily command. Once the army was in his power he wanted un-questioned. He took brides, one after another, in a steady stream, and killed them. In disguise he and his companions roamed the city, rioting and burning at will.

In secret rooms the Spintrians revelled. Magicians and wonderworkers plied their spells for his delight. It was a fresh youth, at the expense of Rome—Rome's fairest women, Rome's finest men, Rome's money, Rome's honor.

**E**VER the Druid was at his side, "You're getting sleek and fat," the Emperor observed one day. "This life agrees with you, too, my friend."

The Druid smiled grimly.

"You're sleek and fat, too, Cæsar. And you're stupid, too."

"What's that?"

In his new-found, intoxicating power, the Emperor was beginning to resent these caustic comments from his servant. The Druid was much too familiar these days, irking in his reminder of superiority. But he had advice to offer. Best to listen.

"What's that?" he repeated, his face growing ugly.

"I say you are stupid, Cæsar. You are supposed to be mad, remember. Here in the palace there are strange rumors, already current, comparing your antics to those of old Tiberius. Quash those rumors, I say. Quash them by diverting attention elsewhere—to your madness. Be mad!"

Then the Druid began to whisper, and as he whispered Cæsar smiled, unpleasantly.

Cæsar went mad the next day.

His favorite horse, Porcellus, was taken from the stable. In the robes of priesthood, Caligula made him a citizen and a senator. With holy oils he



christened the steed anew—"Incitatus" the "swift-speeding."

When the crowd summoned to attend the ceremony at the altar began to grumble uneasily at this strange caprice, Caligula quickly went on with his ceremony. And "Incitatus" became a consul of Rome, one of the three rulers.

Caligula was mad enough for Rome now.

The money was scarce, so he sold public offices and killed the criminals in the prisons to save their keep. Thriftily, he used their bodies in the arena for feeding the wild animals in the shows. He raised more money for his excesses with actors, chariot-eers, and his crew of chosen intimates that attended him on his debauches. The city was openly in revolt by now.

"Madder still," warned the Druid.

Caligula built a bridge of boats across the bay of Baia. Four thousand boats were commandeered from merchants. At the head of his guards he rode across the bridge, throwing coins to the populace who appeared at this public festival. Then he charged back, scattering the mob and killing them, pushing hordes to drown into the water as he fought the sea and defied Neptune.

"Madder still," warned the Druid. There was talk of rebellion.

Caligula became a god in person now. He wore the robes of Jove and appeared as high priest in all temple ceremonies. He took the heads from all statues of the other gods and substituted his own.

"Madder still," warned the Druid. Mutinies were breaking out on the borders of the Empire.

Cæsar frowned, this time.

"I'm mad enough right now," he declared. "After all, Druid, there are limits to human endurance."

"Perhaps." The Druid nodded. "But if they ever let their minds wander to your personal life—"

The Emperor's youthful face took on a dreadful darkness, and it hideously resembled the face of the dead Tiberius. Surely the eyes of Tiberius blazed as he roared:

"Eternal damnation to the people! Yes, and to my evilness as well!

Druid, it's no concern of yours what I do. I fulfilled my promise. I gave you money and comforts and power even over me.

"But my life is my own. I've always hated my people, just as they hate me. Now they shall suffer. I find a deal of pleasure in their suffering. You know, at Capri, I had torture chambers, discovering in my old age that there are peculiar pleasures in inflicting pain. Now I profit by that knowledge and inflict pain while young. Let me have my people to play with, Druid, and do not question me in that. Ah, would but that all Rome had a single neck for me to hack!"

**T**HE Druid's fattening face fell with alarm.

"Cæsar, such talk tempts my gods whose gift you bear! Stop such blasphemy, I pray you!"

"Ah!" The Emperor spat. "Think you I care for your gods? All I need fear is the people—the stupid, silly people. As long as I give them plenty of holidays, plenty of shows in the amphitheater, they will not rebel. As long as I import wild beasts for fights they will be satisfied. And I like the shows. I like the blood. I like the fierceness of the combat. Come see our next show tomorrow, Druid. It will be very interesting."

The Emperor smiled at the Druid. There were secrets in his smile as he watched the plump, unsuspecting face of the wizard.

The wizard smiled at the Emperor. There were secrets in his smile as he watched the plump, unsuspecting face of the Emperor.

The Druid knew the plot. Tomorrow, when Cæsar left the arena, he was to be stabbed to death by conspirators in the guards. Men were sick of his tyranny. His smile was knowing, indeed. Well, let Caligula-Tiberius die. He was sick of the cruel master he had taken.

The use he had made of his new life offended the Druidic gods. This the Druid knew from oracle and divination in secret. He longed to return to Britain now and do penance for his sin. Otherwise, it was written in the



stars, there was a vengeance awaiting the Druid—a vengeance coming soon. So the Druid smiled, for tomorrow Caligula would be dead.

Caligula smiled, for tomorrow the Druid would be dead. He was sick of the sly, bearded man's tyranny. Besides, he was the only one who knew his secret, and should be destroyed for safety. Now this soft palace life had fattened him, dulled his senses and powers. He no longer feared treachery, and probably did not guard against it. It would be easy to rid himself of this leech, and rule as he desired.

Caligula smiled that night as he poured the powder in the Druid's wine at table. This time, he knew, the Druid was unprepared. There would be no mystic power against poison, no resistance.

And it was true. After a few minutes the bearded Briton suddenly slumped forward in his place. His eyes were glazed in paralysis.

Quickly the guards carried him out. Caligula had arranged it all.

The next day the Emperor took his place in the box at the arena. It was a public holiday. The pleasure-seeking people of Rome crowded the gigantic amphitheater as the trumpets blew for the gladiatorial bouts. It was a splendid show and the crowd cheered, but Caligula-Tiberius waited, brooding, for the moment of his triumph.

Then the arena was cleared of bodies, the floor was sanded, and the cages at the far end opened. The lions!

Women—vestals who had profaned their office—huddled in the center as the tawny beasts bounded forward with ripping claws and rending fangs.

The Emperor's nostrils flared at the scent of blood.

The bugles blew. He leaned forward in his box. This was the moment!

The bulls entered. The wild bulls, the horned bulls, the great bulls that killed lions and tigers here in pitched battles. The bulls that killed not for hunger, but out of sheer savageness. The gigantic bulls with the slashing horns that gored and gored their victims into bloody rags. The bulls!

The crowd roared acclaim, and the bulls bellowed and snorted, angered by the noise. The smiling Emperor rose and dropped his baton.

**F**ROM the entry-way beneath his box proceeded a lone figure, an unarmed, white-bearded man, pushed into the arena by the guards. It was the Druid. Still weak from the paralyzing potion, he stumbled into the ring.

The Cæsar laughed. What a jest! He'd feed this foe to the bulls, rid himself of an enemy and enjoy the sport at no expense. The Druid was too dazed for tricks.

The unarmed old man faced the bulls at the farther side of the arena—faced one great white bull that saw him now and began to lope purposefully towards him as the crowd cried out. And the Druid shrieked in a voice rising above the crowd's tumult.

"Mabon! It is Great Mabon come to me in vengeance!"

Cæsar heard the words with a chill of recollection. Mabon? Yes, the bull-god of the Druids. One of the gods the Druid had feared to offend with wickedness. Cæsar laughed again. How apt a death!

"You seek vengeance, Mabon?" screamed the Druid. "Ah, I deserve to die. But not this death, Mabon. I'll take the other, awaiting *him*. Let he that defamed his new life take this death in my stead. Let *him* take it!"

Cæsar heard the words above the roaring. And then, he saw the Druid deliberately turn his back to the loping bull—turn his back and face Cæsar in the imperial box. His eyes were on Tiberius-Caligula, and for a moment they gleamed, despite weakness, as red and powerfully as of old. They were redder, stronger. The Emperor felt the gaze press him, gripped his baton of office firmly in his hand to give him strength in resisting the terrible pressure of that stare.

Then the Druid whispered swiftly. Cæsar saw his lips moving. His own brown eyes fell before that glance and he gripped the baton.

But it was not a baton. It was something cold, and alive, and moving, that crawled about his throat like the stick



the Druid had held that day when Tiberius exchanged souls with Caligula.

Red eyes blazed up, and a thing crawled to move with weird swiftness over the Emperor's throat.

Those in boxes near Cæsar saw him clutch his neck once. They gazed into the ring and saw the red eyes of the Druid flicker and go out.

A single scream from the old man, muffled by the crowd's howling. But it was the voice of the Emperor in his throat. And then the form of the Druid seemed to crumple for a moment and rise again.

This time the Druid did not stand still.

He ran, shrieking insanely, as the great white bull charged down. He ran, yelling for mercy toward the imperial box. And the bull caught him and hurled him high in the air, so that he twisted as he fell to be caught by the cruel, hooking horns. The horns tore and tore, and the

hooves slashed out, and then the bull snorted and stamped on what was left.

All the while the figure of the Emperor remained standing as though whispering a prayer. He no longer clutched his throat, but seemed to smile.

But the Emperor rose suddenly and left his box. He knew where the assassins waited, but did not seek an alternative route. Instead he advanced slowly down the aisle, muttering to himself in a low, strange voice. Onlookers later recalled that he spoke in a peculiar hissing tongue, unknown to men. Others whispered that he murmured over and over, "Thank you great Mabon. Thank you. I shall atone." There is some confusion on this point.

All, however, agree on a strange thing. As the Emperor left the amphitheater they could see that his eyes had changed from their usual dark brown to a deep, blazing red.

## AFTER YOU, MR. HENDERSON

(Concluded from page 102)

"I saw through her—just as she saw through us," answered Eliot.

Lucas methodically straightened some papers on his desk. He made no attempt to explain away the visitation.

"I think Letty was right," he said thoughtfully. "It is time for the firm to be liquidated."

He walked over to the window through which the disembodied La-

tichia had drifted. Cautiously, he peered down.

Eliot came to his side.

"Seventeen stories," murmured Lucas, and slowly raised the window.

He solemnly offered his brother his place.

Eliot declined with a little bow that was the acme of courtesy.

"After you, Mr. Henderson," he said.

# College Humor

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CENTS

THE BEST COMEDY IN AMERICA

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# THE ROOM OF SOULS

By KEITH HAMMOND

*Author of "The Invaders," "The Seventh Coffin," etc*



*Caught in the Satanic Net He Has Himself Woven, Forsythe Learns the Terrible Power of Evil Forces!*

**E**LDON FORSYTHE drank Amontillado and looked at the New York skyline through his window. He was a tall, strongly built man who looked younger than his fifty years, with a thin, handsome face that showed remarkable self-control behind it.

"Satanism?" he repeated, his level gray eyes inscrutable. "In New York? Some ridiculous cult, Morley, I'm sure."

Tom Morley shrugged and stuffed tobacco, heavy with perique, into his briar pipe.

"I don't know. I ran across the chap by accident, and his place looks like a temple of devil-worship, all right. But you know more about that

than I. You went to the Orient to study demonology, didn't you?"

Forsythe turned, the hint of a smile on his thin lips.



"Er—something of the sort. Primitive religions and anthropology. But as for Satanism, the Himalayas worship older gods than Lucifer. Nevertheless, this Shackleton fellow interests me. He hasn't run afoul of the law, eh?"

Morley's rugged, tanned face broadened into a grin.

"Oh, he hasn't been sacrificing any children, if that's what you mean. He's no Gilles de Rais. But he puts on a good show, and he's got a lot of adherents to his cult. Wealthy men, some of them—and that may be significant."

"Blackmail?" Forsythe suggested.

"I doubt it. Shackleton strikes me as a pretty naïve fellow. A bluffer, though he's got some good tricks."

"I think I'd like to meet him," Forsythe said thoughtfully. "He sounds like a stage magician, but there may be something in it."

"Good," Morley said. "Tomorrow night? He's putting on a show—a Black Mass, he says."

"Tomorrow night," Forsythe assented, and the conversation turned to lighter subjects. In a short while Morley left, and his host was alone.

Eldon Forsythe smiled. He shook a few drops of bitters into a glass, filled it with dry sherry, and relaxed in a chair, slowly sipping the wine. It had been pleasant to see Morley again, the first familiar face he had seen in three years. Almost, for a second, those years of mystery and strangeness and wonder were briefly forgotten, and Forsythe was again the avid, wide-eyed student of the occult who had left New York to acquire knowledge.

**W**ELL, he had captured that knowledge. And, as yet, the price was not too heavy. Never wealthy, he was now beggared, but hidden in his brain were keys that would unlock treasure houses.

Purposely he had told Morley little of his experiences. He had not mentioned the old Arab in Baghdad who had, for a large sum, given him the name of a Damascene named Said al Zarif. And he had not spoken of the dark cult in Damascus, or of the quest

that had taken him from the marge to the inner mysteries of the dark lore.

Yes, that trip had been well worthwhile. But even now Forsythe shuddered slightly as he recalled his initiation, and the Blood Seal that had been marked indelibly upon his breast.

Before Forsythe had crossed the Atlantic, he had known little indeed of demonology. Now he knew it too well. Before his eyes floated visions of an exotic paradise, thronged with sloe-eyed houris and great *afrits*, drug-begotten phantasms he had seen in Eastern lands. And he remembered other things. . . .

However, it was necessary to be practical now. Money was required. Forsythe's bank balance was dangerously low, and his investments had been neglected for three years. This "devil-worshiper," Shackleton, sounded promising, and Forsythe smiled again as he sipped his favorite wine.

Tomorrow night he would know.

Time passed, slowly enough, but eventually the hour came. Morley called, and the two taxied down to an apartment house overlooking Central Park. Morley was gleeful.

"Think you can show him up?" he asked. "The chap has an entire penthouse. Fixed it up like a surrealist's nightmare. You'll see."

"I expect so," Forsythe said enigmatically. His gray eyes were lidded as the elevator slid noiselessly up.

A Negro servant met them. "You are expected?" He glanced at the small card Morley produced. "Yes, sair. And this other gentleman?"

"He's all right. I'll vouch for him."

"Yes, sair. This way."

They were ushered into a large room, and Forsythe could not help grinning. Black velvet drapes hid the walls. A dim red light came from swinging censers, while braziers on metal tripods sent up musky coils of incense. The carpet, into which cabalistic designs had been woven, was of flaming crimson. The mystic pentagram formed the center. At one end of the room was an organ. At the other was a featureless black altar.

A dozen men were seated here and there, looking rather uncomfortable.



Most of them were in formal evening attire. All wore domino masks.

"You are looking through a mirror, sair," the Negro explained. "At least it is a mirror on the other side. The gentlemen cannot see you. Here are your masks."

Forsythe and Morley donned them. The panel was slid aside, and they crossed the threshold. The other men looked up, and then averted their gaze.

"Let's sit here," Morley suggested. "The show ought to start soon."

**T**HERE was a queer, half-furtive anticipation in his manner. Forsythe glanced at him sharply.

The lights in the room darkened. A low, sonorous tone sounded. Abruptly the organ began to play. Its keys were depressed, though no one sat on the bench. Invisible hands seemed to launch into the opening chords of Halvorsen's eery March of the Bo-jaren. Music as mad as Grieg's, Forsythe thought, but the sheer unearthliness of Cristobal Colon would have been more effective.

The piece ended thunderously. Suddenly there was a black-clad figure standing before the altar. A greenish glow illuminated his pudgy face.

"Shackleton," Morley whispered.

Forsythe looked at the man with interest. Shackleton was quite short, almost fat, and his round moon face looked singularly devoid of diabolism. He had cultivated a mustache and goatee, but only in his jet, unwinking eyes was there any hint of—alienage.

Then he spoke, and Forsythe acknowledged that the voice was impressive. Deep, yet strangely soothing, it seemed to fill the room.

"You are here to get your hearts' desire. Only by the powers of the Prince of Air and Darkness can man attain happiness. Open your minds to him. Empty them of scoffing thoughts. Concentrate on the ultimate darkness."

The round, pallid face glowed through the red dimness of the room.

"Satan is the Ape of God," Shackleton said. "Without darkness there can be no light."

Forsythe sensed a change within the room, in the very atmosphere. He

strove to analyze it, concentrating all his senses. Then he had it. The odor of the incense had altered.

Forsythe smiled, but said nothing. Child's play! And Shackleton went on.

"I bring you your hearts' desire. The Lord of All approaches. . . ."

The voice went on, soporific, velvety. The sound of heavy breathing came.

"... Satan gives you your wish—"

Suddenly Forsythe tensed. He did not move, but the gray eyes lost their casual gaze. Purpose and intentness sprang into them. His lips moved inaudibly.

The voice of Shackleton hesitated, went on, and then halted again. The Satanist paused, motionless. His round face looked vaguely troubled. It changed. A blind, passive expression crept over it. Shackleton stood as if fettered—and again the room's atmosphere changed.

It grew cold, with a dank, unpleasant chill, sensed rather than actually felt. The red lights seemed to grow dimmer. And, in the center of the carpet, above the magic pentagram, a faint luminous mist began to form.

Brighter it grew, and brighter. It whirled like a tiny nebula, assuming form and substance. Then something crouched upon the rug, scarcely apaque, a creature like a giant toad, three feet high at least. The yellow, reptilian eyes watched unblinkingly.

**F**ROM Shackleton broke a cry of fear. Abruptly the phantom grew fainter and vanished in a swirl of mist. The air seemed to become warmer.

Forsythe stood up purposefully. He crossed the room to Shackleton and put his hand on a plump shoulder.

"I'd like to talk with you," he said. "Alone."

The Satanist strove to regain his scattered wits.

"Return to your place. Soon you will—"

"Come, come," Forsythe broke in impatiently. "You've drugged the others soundly with hasheesh, but it doesn't affect me, as you see. Leave them to their dreams and take me where we can talk. Unless—"



He glanced significantly at the pentagram on the rug.

Shackleton hesitated, shrugged, and pushed aside a black drape. He opened a door, standing aside while Forsythe crossed the threshold. Then he joined his uninvited guest.

Forsythe sank into a comfortable chair and looked around. He was in a well appointed living room, tastefully decorated, and containing no suggestion of the occult. Through French windows he could see the yellow sign that crowned Rockefeller Center and, beyond it, the tower of the Empire State. Smiling, he withdrew a case from his pocket and offered Shackleton a cigarette.

The Satanist accepted one, with an obvious effort at self-control. But his fingers shook as he used a lighter.

"First of all," Forsythe said conversationally, "you're a faker. But I have no intention of exposing you, unless you force me to do something."

"You know nothing of the mysteries of the Beyond—" Shackleton began.

"Indeed? Then how do you suppose I materialized that elemental? I know your game quite well. The men in the other room pay you well, and in return you drug them with hasheesh and they dream of various pleasant things. It has been done in the East for ages. As for the other mumbo-jumbo—" Forsythe made a contemptuous gesture. "Curiously enough, however, you created favorable conditions for a true seance. More favorable than you guessed—for you are an unconscious medium."

Now Shackleton looked really frightened. He moistened his lips.

"Who are you?" he murmured.

"Eldon Forsythe, but that means nothing to you as yet. You are a faker. I am not. I have certain—powers—which can be used for more purposes than materializing earth-born spirits. Unfortunately, these powers do not include alchemy or the philosophers' stone. I cannot make gold—"

"You want money?" Shackleton asked. "Blackmail?"

Forsythe's thin, handsome face was amused. "I need more money than you can possibly have. I need your help.

You have no conception of what may be done with a cult of this type. Do you have any wine?"

Startled at the abrupt question, Shackleton brought out a decanter of execrable port from the sideboard. He filled one glass, and had begun to fill another when Forsythe halted him.

"That will be enough. Watch, now."

**H**E TOOK a crystal vial from his pocket and shook out a pinch of white, glittering powder into the red liquid. It dissolved instantly.

"Drink it," Forsythe said.

Shackleton drew back, his pudgy face frightened.

"It isn't poisoned. You won't be harmed. Drink it."

"No," the Satanist said through dry lips.

In Forsythe's hand was a small glittering prism. He turned it so that a flash of light struck Shackleton between the eyes.

"Drink the wine," Forsythe commanded.

The other obeyed, this time without question. For a time he sat passive, while Forsythe stared fixedly into the black eyes. Then he roused and glanced at the empty glass in his hand. It dropped to shatter on the rug.

"Look at the window," Forsythe said in a soft, commanding voice.

Shackleton obeyed once more.

"What do you see?"

"A room—" The Satanist's voice was thick. "A room beyond the window."

"What is in that room?"

"A throne—and a sceptre."

Forsythe smiled. "That is your heart's desire. Power. Take it."

Shackleton rose and went to the window. He opened it. A chill wind blew through the room, rustling the drapes. The Satanist stepped out.

"Waken!" Forsythe said sharply.

Almost before the words had left his lips Shackleton was back in the room. He headed directly for the sideboard and drank a stiff tot of brandy before he turned to face Forsythe.

"A room—I saw it. It was real."

"The laws of energy and matter are



linked with psychic power." Forsythe nodded. "But velvet drapes and incantations are not necessary in order to bring about certain—changes. I learned that in Tibet. The power of will, aided by a chemical metamorphosis, is sufficient."

"Was that room—real?" Shackleton asked. The man had been shaken to the depths of his being.

"It was not matter, as we know it. Yet it was real enough, on another plane—a spiritual one, if you will. That's beside the point. There was a balcony outside those windows. Suppose there had been none?"

"It's twenty stories down," Shackleton whispered. "You mean—"

"Yes. You would have fallen. At least your body would have. But the essence of you — what Egyptians called the *Ka*—would have remained in that room."

**H**E LIT another cigarette.

"Your cult must be reorganized. I want you to create several companies; charities, perhaps. Their functions will be purely nominal. You will own them secretly. Members of your cult will be induced to make their wills in the favor of these companies. It should not be too difficult."

"They wouldn't—"

"Not for you, perhaps. But I have certain—powers. I can give to a man an ecstasy for which he would sacrifice his soul. Heart's desire!" Forsythe laughed. "How do you suppose the Assassins were kept in bondage? I shall teach you a great deal, Shackleton. But no one must know my connection with you. You will handle the financial angle, and give me such money as I may need from time to time."

"Murder!" Shackleton said through pallid lips. "It's outright murder. I can't—"

Forsythe said nothing, but his gaze met and locked with the other man's frightened stare. . . .

It had been surprisingly easy, Forsythe thought three months later, as his taxi threaded its way down Fifth Avenue. Not a murmur of suspicion had been aroused. First Charles Masterson had fallen or jumped from an

office building above Broadway, and most of his fortune had gone to the Griggs Charity Foundation, and thence to Shackleton, who secretly owned the organization.

Well, Masterson had had his fun. For weeks he had spent his nights in paradise, in an ecstasy few men ever attained on earth. After him there were two others. And now Forsythe purchased a newspaper from an urchin who thrust it through the cab window. He read:

#### SUICIDE WAVE HITS NEW YORK! SIMON MONDAY FOURTH TO LEAP TO DEATH!

Dec. 5 (AP)—Simon Monday, wealthy New York banker, today hurled himself from a window on the twenty-third story of the Root Building. He was instantly killed . . .

Forsythe read on, with interest. Monday's partner had been with him at the time. He had vainly tried to halt the suicidal leap. Monday had seemed almost dazed, he said, and without warning had risen from his desk, walked to the open window, which had a low sill, and stepped out. Chief beneficiary in Monday's will was the Sido Fund, a newly-created charity.

The taxi stopped. Forsythe got out, paid the driver, and entered the restaurant which had been his destination. Tom Morley waved at him from a table.

"Hello," Forsythe said, seating himself. "It's been quite awhile since I've seen you. You sounded excited on the phone. I take it this isn't purely social?"

"Not quite." Morley's rugged face wore an odd expression. "I see you've got the paper."

"Yes. Too bad about Monday. Did you know him?"

"He belonged to Shackleton's cult," Morley said.

"Eh? The Satanist fellow? I thought they were all masked."

"They were," Morley grunted, toying with his cocktail glass. "But I've been doing a bit of investigation lately. Paid a private detective agency."

Forsythe repressed the rage that welled up within him. Meddling fool!



"I only went to Shackleton's once, with you, of course, but did you ever go back?" he asked softly.

The other flushed. "Yes. Pretty often."

**Y**ES, Forsythe thought to himself, Morley had gone back. Night after night he had gone to lose himself in dreams of a fantastic paradise. It was not news to Forsythe.

Morley drank his Martini at a gulp and fished for the olive.

"You know — I'd always thought Shackleton was a fake. But he isn't. He's something worse. That man can open the doors to hell and heaven. Anyway, I couldn't stay away from his place. I thought if I could prove to myself he was an imposter, it would help, and I paid detectives to find out. They found out something else. Those four men who have committed suicide lately were members of Shackleton's cult."

"Yes?"

"I wish you'd help me, Forsythe. The detectives couldn't—not in the way I wanted. But you know a good deal about these things, and maybe—maybe—" Morley hesitated, ill at ease. "I want to stop going to Shackleton's, and I can't! That's the whole thing in a nutshell."

"All right," Forsythe said with decision. "Tomorrow night, eh? I can't make it before that. You can keep away tonight. Go to a play. Or get drunk. Use your will power."

Morley's relief was evident. But there was a tiny crease between his eyebrows. Forsythe guessed the reason, and smiled to himself. He knew well enough that Morley would visit the Satanist that evening.

Before sundown, however, Forsythe himself called on Shackleton. He took the precaution of pulling his hat brim over his eyes, and muffling the lower part of his face in a silk scarf. The Negro admitted him, and Forsythe sniffed at an unfamiliar odor. He heard muffled knocking sounds.

"Redecorating?" he asked.

"Yes, sair. But the workmen are nearly finished. If you will wait, Mr. Shackleton will see you immediately."

The Satanist emerged into the outer

hall. His face was shockingly emaciated. In a few months the man had become drained of all nervous energy. Pouches sagged under his dull eyes, and his manner was furtive and constrained.

"Sorry I can't ask you in," he said, with a strained attempt at jocularly. "Redecoration is a bad job."

The Negro had gone. Forsythe came to the point immediately.

"Morley must die tomorrow," he said. "He'll be here tonight. Put the white powder in his liquor and be sure you don't fail."

"Morley? I thought he was an old friend of yours."

"Yes," Forsythe assented, smiling. "But I do not suppose that matters very much to you."

Shackleton rubbed his forehead. "I feel very bad," he complained. "This . . . I don't know how much longer I can keep it up."

"You are a fool," Forsythe observed without rancor. "You have more money than you've ever had, and you're no longer a trickster. I've taught you many things."

The other man laughed bitterly. "That's a reason for gratitude, I suppose. I'm nearly dead. You've managed to strengthen my mediumistic powers so that I've scarcely any control of them. They're drawing my life away. Day and night I can hear them whispering. I saw Monday today."

"What? His ghost?"

"It sounds silly enough. But I've seen Masterson, too, and the others. After they died. I saw them in that room."

"There's nothing I can do," Forsythe said. "You're an involuntary medium, and you can't shut the power on and off like a tap. Take a bromide after Morley goes and try to sleep."

**S**HACKLETON'S face was a pitiful, tragic ruin.

"When I sleep—I dream," he whispered.

But Forsythe was gone, well satisfied with himself. Morley would have no chance now to blunder onto the truth. It served the fool right, of course. He had had no business to set detectives on Shackleton's trail.



Afternoon papers the next day carried the news of Morley's suicide. His money had been left to the Griggs Foundation. At ease in his apartment, Forsythe smiled and made an entry in his notebook. Then, with genuine pleasure, he examined his bankbook and made a quick estimate.

The trip to the Orient had paid well, after all. What was the old saw—"Those who sup with the devil need a long spoon?" Well, the business was even safer if others held the spoon.

The phone rang. Forsythe heard Shackleton's voice, sharp with urgency.

"Hello? Oh, you saw the papers?"

"Of course. What of it?"

"I've got to see you! Tonight—now! It's vital!"

"I'll meet you—"

"No," Shackleton said, almost hysterically. "I can't leave. I can't tell you over the phone. Come at once! I'm afraid—"

"The dreams?" Forsythe hazarded, lighting a cigarette with one hand.

"Worse. If you don't come, I'll—phone someone else."

"I'll be over immediately," Forsythe said quickly. "Five minutes or less. Good-by." He hung up, realizing that in Shackleton's state of mind the man might easily get in touch with the police. That, obviously, was the meaning of his implied threat.

Forsythe paused for a glass of sherry and, making a wry face, pulled on his gloves and overcoat and left the apartment. A taxi took him to Shackleton's home.

The Satanist himself opened the door. The Negro was nowhere in evidence. Shackleton led the way into the temple room, in which an ordinary light bulb was burning in place of the usual red globes. The sable drapes looked cheap and tawdry in the white glare. One of them was pulled aside to show the door to Shackleton's private room, where Forsythe had first interviewed him.

Shackleton went to that door, pushed it half open and, changing his mind, turned back and went to the black altar. He put his head upon it, cradling his arms, and began to cry, in choked, gasping sobs.

FORSYTHE waited, his agile mind pondering possible solutions to the problem.

"We're wasting time," he finally said. "What is it, Shackleton?"

The Satanist lifted his haggard face. "I was a fool to do what you wanted. Worse than a fool. I'm going to quit, now."

"You can't," Forsythe said. "You can't lose your mediumistic powers now, even if you wanted to. If you never saw me again, you'd still have them. It's dangerous to play with fire."

"Those voices—" Shackleton hammered his pudgy fist on the altar. "Those men! I see them. Now Morley. Not ten minutes after he died I saw him, in that frightful room. With the others."

Forsythe pulled aside a drape and looked out at the New York lights.

"I see," he murmured. "Well, perhaps hypnotism may help you. We can—" He paused, his lean body tense. "Someone is coming."

The annunciator rang.

"You expected someone?" Forsythe asked silkily.

"No. No—not tonight."

Again the summons sounded, peremptorily. Forsythe crossed the room with quick strides. He touched a button, and a panel at his elbow glowed into life. Shadowy forms appeared and grew more distinct.

"The police," Forsythe murmured. "You tried to trap me, eh?"

"Police?" Sudden alarm showed in Shackleton's face. "I swear I didn't!"

The man might not be lying. Morley's detectives might have turned the matter over to the police after their client's curious death. But no—Shackleton had threatened to turn informer. His very pose spoke of guilt.

"They'll break down the door soon," Forsythe remarked, returning to stand before Shackleton.

"The private elevator—we can get down that. We can get away!"

"Of course. Even if the back entrance is guarded, I can protect myself." Forsythe took a vial from his coat. "A pinch of this blown into the air, and the police will not even see me as I go past. They will be



cataleptic for an hour or more. But before I go"—his hand shot out to fasten on Shackleton's throat—"before I go I must make sure you will not betray me again."

The Satanist tried to scream. Vainly he fought. But his flabby strength was useless. Thrashing, struggling, kicking, he was borne down.

It did not take long. Forsythe rose from the prostrate body as the annunciator shrilled again. This time it did not cease.

Something had fallen from Shackleton's pocket. It was a key. Forsythe picked it up, examining it carefully, for the shape was vaguely familiar. Then, as a crashing thud came, he pocketed the key and turned from the contorted, dead face that stared up at him.

**T**HE private elevator would take him safely from the midst of his enemies. Forsythe decided to kill any police who might be waiting below. Unconsciousness wouldn't be enough, for when they awakened they might remember their assailant's features, no matter how well shielded by hat brim and muffler. After that Forsythe would be quite safe from detection. Yet it might be well to travel for a time.

Something made Forsythe glance toward the half-open door of Shackleton's study. What he saw brought him to an abrupt halt. Good Lord! The Satanist had been cleverer than he had ever realized.

For the desk in the other room was piled with currency, tall stacks of it! Certainly that could not be left for the police. Shackleton must have had a fortune hidden in some secret place. Heedless of the jolting shocks on the outer door as the police tried to burst through the metal-lined panel, Forsythe stepped over the threshold of

Shackleton's study in a bound.

His foot seemed to go right through the rug. For a horrible instant Forsythe tottered, and then fell. He slid down an inclined ramp, while the room vanished, and the lights of New York's towers were all about him. And then he was falling through empty air.

His plunge seemed curiously slow. He had time to think, and remember. He recalled the "interior decorating" Shackleton had had done. Even then the Satanist must have planned his trap. The study had been torn out, removed bodily from the penthouse. In its place a polished, inclined slide had been substituted.

But the powder? How had Shackleton tricked him into taking the powder? Forsythe remembered the key that had fallen from the Satanist's pocket, and knew now why it had seemed familiar. It was the key to his own apartment, or a duplicate of it. And for several days his sherry had tasted strangely.

It was clear now, all of it. Shackleton had lured his master into the trap that had been set for so many others. He had not known of the police raid, after all.

Forsythe felt a wrenching jolt, a sickening stab of flaming agony. The world dissolved in darkness. . . .

Light came again, slowly. He was back in the room, in Shackleton's study. So it seemed, but Forsythe knew that his body was lying, crushed and broken, on the pavement far below. It was not Forsythe's body that stood in the room, watching the furnishings, the desk, the piles of currency, fade and vanish like mist.

He stood in a square cubicle, windowless and dim.

And, irrevocably, Forsythe knew that those gray, bare walls would prison him for ever and ever, until the end of eternity.

•  
NEXT ISSUE

## SATAN'S SIDESHOW

*A Novelet of Siamese Twins* by CARSON JUDSON





By LUCIFER

*Famous Authority on Witchcraft and Superstition*

**M**EDIUMS, seances, ectoplasm, ghost-trance, psychic phenomena—is it all hallucination and poppy-cock? Are mediums pathological cases, self-hypnotists or neurotics who are able to stimulate certain nerve energy of the human body, causing spasms and convulsions which affect the mind and the subconscious?

But why does it persist? Why are more and more people everyday turning to psychic stimulation? What is it that holds them? What if we do prove that ninety-nine percent of it is hokum? What of the remaining one percent? Isn't that enough to be worth consideration by science?

#### *Serious Study*

And science is investigating. The conservative New York *Herald Tribune* carried the following item on February 16, 1940:

"'Cambridge breaks British ban against spiritualistic research,' said a front-page headline in a London newspaper today. The headline appeared above a news item disclosing that the virtual ban at Cambridge University on psychic research has been lifted. The investigation will be the first of its kind that has ever been conducted outside of the United States. Cambridge will be following in the footsteps of Harvard University and other American institutions of higher learning.

"'Psychic research is to be defined as the investigation of mental and physical phenomena which seem *prima facie* to suggest: (a) the existence of super-normal powers of cognition or action in human beings in their present life, or (b) the persistence of the human mind after death.

"'The establishment of the studentship does not imply that the governing body of the college have reached any conclusion on the existence of psychic phenomena. The intention is to encourage a serious study of the subject, and the research worker will be expected to approach his studies with an open mind.'"

That is the proper way to go about it—but psychic researchers of the past smile. They point to the great prediction made many years ago that "1940 will be the year of a wonderful psychic awakening throughout the world." Will Black Arts come into its own this year? We haven't long to wait.

Mediums seem essential to psychic research. For these people, who are super-psychic, are supposed to be able to ema-

nate a high frequency vibration of subconscious power that contacts the occult energy, resulting in strange phenomena of vision, sound and activity. Let us look at some of the psychic experiences that have been reported.

#### *Seance Trance*

NEW YORK CITY, 1925: A middle-aged woman medium of good reputation has been summoned to a private laboratory, surrounded by skeptical minds who have come out of curiosity. She has agreed to perform free of charge, for she says she believes in her strange power.

The medium is weighed, then strapped to a stationary chair. Experience has shown that a medium in a trance convulses like a victim of electrocution. She is then tested for body current and the ohms recorded. Lights are extinguished except for one small red bulb in the rear of the laboratory.

The spectators are quiet for many moments, then suddenly the medium begins to twitch. Her eyes open and close irregularly. Her face first registers an expression of pain, then becomes relaxed. Convulsions shake her body. The straps binding her, strain, and the leather creaks. There is more strength being exerted than any woman could generate under normal consciousness. Her muscles reveal that to the doctor present.

But she is in a trance—that is evident, because she does not feel a needle as it penetrates the flesh of her arm and is quickly withdrawn.

#### *Weird Phenomena*

Presently the room grows cold. Everyone feels a draft, but there are no doors or windows open. The owner of the laboratory knows that there are no secret ventilators.



The medium is now quiet. Her eyes are closed. Then attention is focused on a desk to one side of the medium where there are some papers and several books. The sheets of paper begin to move as though some invisible hand were shaking them. Suddenly they fly into the air as though caught by a heavy breeze. Then they flutter to the floor.

But now a book moves. That is too heavy to be lifted by a gust of wind no matter where it comes from. One spectator snickers. Instantly that book flies at him as though thrown by an angry hand. He ducks and the book hits the wall and drops to the floor.

A paper drinking cup now wins the gaze of spectators. It rises from the table beside a water bottle and is suspended in the air. What is holding it? No one can see, although the red light is sufficient for a spectator to see all sides of it. It begins to float in the air around the heads of the witnesses. One man reaches for it and it moves quickly from his grasp. Then it drops on the lap of the medium and remains still.

A strange whistling sound now hits the ears of the onlookers. But no one is whistling. The medium's lips are tight shut. Then the fragrance of roses is sensed by all present. But no one has perfume on him!

#### *The Voice From Without*

The medium moves again. Her lips open. Everyone expects to hear a voice, but only a sigh escapes like one gasping for breath. She is trying to speak.

For several moments she strains. Then finally words boom forth: "I am so tired." But the spectators are astonished. It is not the voice of a woman, but the deep resonant vibration of a man.

The eyes of the medium are now open. Something tells the audience that these are not the eyes of a woman, but those of a man—an elderly man.

One of the spectators gasps. Others turn to him, but say nothing.

The voice in the medium speaks again. "I am so tired—I am so tired!"

Then the medium trembles. Her eyes and mouth close. The observers wait but the voice does not come again. But something else seems to be coming out of her mouth—not sound, but a smokelike vapor. It pours in a steady stream from her nose and mouth, rising for several feet above her head and beyond her. It is like unfolding gauze as it twists and turns, unaffected by a breeze which one of the spectators creates purposely. And like a shadow it is not disturbed as he passes his hand through it. He experiences, however, a sensation of coldness, the opposite of sun rays.

Ectoplasm!

No words are spoken in this laboratory of bewilderment. The stillness is deafening. Spectators feel a strange pressure on the ear-drums as though they are entombed

deep in the bowels of the earth, for what they are seeing belongs not to the surface.

#### *Shadow or Substance?*

All eyes are focused on the phenomenon before them. The flow of effluvium from the medium's body ceases, leaving a single cloud of drifting enigma. Whether the observers imagine it or not, they see a face and shoulders taking form in the density of the substance which seems to diminish.

It is the face of an old man, wrinkled, with a high forehead and large nose. And those eyes—the spectators have seen those eyes before. They had been in the sockets of the medium when the voice was heard. Does that face belong to the personality that had made itself heard through the vocal chords of the medium?

Then a piercing scream—"stop!"—comes from one of the spectators, who falls in a faint. He is a young man and has never attended a seance before.

The tension and mystery are too much for him.

The laboratory is flooded with light. The owner cares more for the lad than he does for the seance, and soon the doctor brings the young man to consciousness. He is sorry. He couldn't help it.

"That was my grandfather," he explains. "When he died he kept saying, 'I am so tired—I am so tired.' And he loved roses—we covered his coffin with them."

Eyes then turn to the medium who has slumped in her chair. At first she is believed dead, but her pulse beats slightly. Slowly she regains consciousness, but she is very weak. She cannot speak—as mute as one who has just suffered a great shock. The shriek of the young man had caused it. Too sudden a transition.

One spectator measures her body current. It is thirty percent less than when she was first examined. She is weighed. She has lost seven pounds. The seance is over.

#### *The Skeptic's Conjecture*

Rubbish! That's what the skeptic will say.

"Mass hypnotism," he will explain, "produced by the subconscious of the young man who was overwrought by the nervousness in seeing his first seance. No one doubts that the spectators actually saw what they did in their minds, but not in a physical sense of sight or hearing."

True, until actual photographs can be made of such things, it remains conjecture. That is what science intends to find out.

But some research workers do possess phonograph records of words spoken by mediums under trance, and in strange voices, even in ancient languages of which the mediums knew nothing. But the skeptic still persists in saying: "Merely clever impersonations by the medium."

Perhaps some day the radio authorities will allow such records to be broadcast. If a simple uneducated medium can deliver such masterpieces of impersonation, she



should be on the radio, not in a seance hall. At least, she is missing her calling.

Cemetery Visit

But here is a strange psychic experience attested by affidavit by the young man who experienced it, a man who is now in middle age and respected in his profession. It happened in June, 1914, in an eastern state. Credit for this story must be given to that well-known phychic investigator, Ed Bodin, the author of the forthcoming book, SCARE ME, which is a symposium of ghosts and black magic.

A young man unexpectedly calls on his lady friend on the outskirts of the city. It is high moon, and the evening is gloriously bright. But the young lady has left that afternoon to visit a relative in a distant village.

Disappointed, the young man heads for the trolley to take him back to town. The cemetery is close by—at the end of the line. That would be the best place to meet the car.

But the evening is early and the young man is sad. He continues walking in the moonlight, passing the side entrance to the cemetery.

In the center of the driveway he stops. For some reason he looks toward a hill dotted with sepulchers. Beside one of the vaults is a strange glow. He dismisses any thought of the uncanny and charges it to the moonbeams—just a reflection of the moon on the marble side of the vault.

But why should moonbeams move? He is urged to run. A cemetery is no place for a man in love. But he hates cowards. Then he has a comforting suggestion: maybe something is on fire and smoldering.

The Fading Face

Summoning youthful fortitude to the front, he ventures up the hill, slowly, cautiously. The smokelike glow is still there. Yes, something must be smoldering in the grass on a plot beside the vault.

He is within ten feet of the enigma, when he stops. Beneath the curling smoke he sees a body prone on the ground. It is a man. The man must be smoking—or else a cigar is burning beside him.

The boy draws closer. Then he really becomes bewildered—and terrified. In the pale smoke-cloud so clearly visible in the moonlight, he sees the face of a woman—a pretty woman—with long dark hair. . . .

But it is only a momentary flash, for just then the screech of trolley wheels on curved tracks makes him jump and turn. When he looks again, the face has disappeared and the smoke has faded.

In fear rather than curiosity, he leans over the man and touches a shoulder. The man shudders, turns his head and looks up at the youth and stammers:

"Who—who are you?"  
The youth, glad that the man is not dead, answers:

(Continued on page 124)



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(Continued from page 123)

"Why, I saw some smoke from the road and thought there was a fire up here."

The man sits up. "Smoke—smoke? I'm not smoking."

For the moment the lad has forgotten the smoke. Now he realizes it has gone. He blames it on the moon.

"I thought I saw smoke, sir—I'm sorry I bothered you."

### The Photograph

The man sighs and slowly rises to his feet. He wipes his eyes. The boy can see that he has been weeping.

"That's all right, son. I suppose it's foolish of me to be here so late—but my wife was buried here this afternoon and I just couldn't leave the grave. I couldn't bear going back to the house alone. You don't know what her loss means to me."

The boy tries to console the sorrowful man the best he can.

"Why, I'll take you home—I have nothing to do tonight."

"Thanks, son—maybe your walking in with me would help. I told all my relatives to leave me alone—must have been out of my mind. But I feel better now."

The man lives less than a mile away, so the two strangers walk together, the boy listening kindly as the elder one tells the full story of his grief.

It is a beautiful house. The husband is trying his best to hide his despair as he opens the front door. As they enter the living room, the man goes ahead to the kitchen to bring the boy something to drink.

The lad looks at the table. Something he sees there brings back the vision he has seen in the moonlit smoke hovering over the man in the graveyard.

It is the photograph of a woman—a beautiful woman—the same face, the same long hair. He knows he will never forget it as long as he lives.

### Can These Things Be?

But he is not frightened. He can't understand it, of course, but a strange calmness comes over him as he turns to the approaching husband and says:

"This is your wife—isn't it?"

And the tearful eyes of the husband answer in the affirmative. . . .

Mediums, seances, ectoplasm, ghost-trance, psychic phenomena—who knows? Perhaps we shall have the true answer in the not so distant future.

## LETTERS FROM READERS

**F**IRST of all, we want to thank all of you for your fine letters! The response to our request for letters has been overwhelmingly gratifying, and it would be



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quite impossible, as you can easily imagine, to undertake personal answers or even include a generous proportion of the total number of letters. All that we can hope to do is to print a small fraction of them, those that are most interesting or most typical.

This department is an open forum, and our readers should consider it in that light. Any information anybody has that we deem of interest to others we will try to include in this section of the magazine. Naturally, we're limited by space requirements—but when all is said and done, our readers get a pretty good cross-section of the opinions and comments of others. So if you have something interesting to say, don't keep it to yourself. We all want to get in on it together!

Now for our first letter. It's from a reader who wants to delve a little deeper into the occult:

I have been interested in mysticism and psychic investigation for many years, and I would like to know if there are any books that I can read on this subject besides books by Cheiro which are unavailable because of the present war conditions in Europe.

I would like to add that I enjoy your Lucifer articles very much.

Jerry Rothman.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Quite a few readers have asked for the same information, and we'd like to point out that we printed a list of books in the December, 1939, issue. But for the benefit of those who haven't that issue, we'll re-print the list:

## AGENTS WANTED!

CLERKS and WORKERS in FACTORIES, MILLS, C.C.C. CAMPS, OFFICES, NAVY, ARMY, MERCHANT MARINE, ETC. Rare Opportunity. Earn EXTRA MONEY. 50% commission selling our new Red, White and Blue Enamelled Metal Etched, Lifetime SOCIAL SECURITY and IDENTIFICATION PLATES in leather Billfolds. Money and Postage Refunded on demand. For Salesmen's Outfit, print clearly your name, address and S. S. Number and mail with 25c cash or stamps to the largest concern in this line.

WM. NAMENT, 655 W. Lexington St., Baltimore, Md.

MODERN MYSTICS AND MAGIC, by W. S. Moses, published by Charles Scribner, N. Y. C.; THE ADVENTURES OF A MODERN OCCULTIST, by Oliver Bland, Dodd-Mead Co., N. Y. C.; LIFE, DEATH AND DESTINY, by Robert Alexander, C. W. Daniel Co., London, England; MODERN CULTS AND MOVEMENTS, by G. G. Atkins, Fleming Revell Co., N. Y. C.; SECRETS OF BLACK ARTS, published by I. Ottenheimer, Baltimore, Md.; BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE IN PSYCHIC FACTS, by Nellie Beighle, Alliance Publishing Co., N. Y. C.

Also, a good general introduction to the subject would be L. Thorndyke's HISTORY OF MAGIC AND EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE. We suggest, however, since the above books may not be available to you, that you visit your public library and pick out books to your liking.

You will find them listed under various divisions such as Black Magic, Mysticism, Occultism, Witchcraft, etc.

Here's an interesting letter from a com-  
(Continued on page 126)



# WANTED

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Salaries \$1700-\$2600 Per Year

NO LAYOFFS! VACATIONS WITH PAY!

## A LIFETIME JOB

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So sure are we that our simplified Interstate Home Study Courses of coaching will result in your passing the examinations and being appointed that we are willing to accept your enrollment on the following basis. The price of our complete 10-week lesson course is \$30 plus \$3 Examiners' Fee.

We are willing to give you any course with the understanding that you are to pay for the Course **ONLY AFTER YOU ARE APPOINTED AND WORKING.** Should you take the examination and fail, or not be appointed for any reason whatsoever, the loss will be ours and you will not owe us one cent for the course.

**Pay for Course Only  
After You Are  
Appointed & Working**

**So Get Started TODAY - WORK FOR UNCLE SAM!**

**Clip and Mail This Coupon NOW!**

INTERSTATE HOME STUDY BUREAU S.M.4  
901 BROAD ST., DIV. S.M.4, NEWARK, N. J.

Please RUSH me the full particulars of your 10-week lesson course. It is understood that I am not to pay for the course until I am appointed and working. I am interested in (check box):

☐ City P. O. Mail Carrier ☐ Rural Mail Carrier  
☐ Railway Mail Clerk ☐ P. O. Clerk

Name.....  
(Please print plainly in pencil)

Address.....

City..... State.....

If you wish Paste on Postcard and Mail.

(Continued from page 125)

mercial artist interested in the supernatural:

I have been reading and seeking everything pertaining to the occult for some ten years now, so with my introduction to your splendid magazine I have something to "fill the bill" because in my search for strange stories I had practically exhausted the supply, when behold **STRANGE STORIES** Magazine appears.

My interest in the supernatural is two-fold; first, as a commercial artist I find great enjoyment in doing illustrations of occult nature. Secondly, I have studied and written on these subjects. I have been very fortunate in securing some very rare works by well-known authorities. I have a privately printed book titled "The Book of Black Magic," by A. E. Waite, published 1808, now out of print, and "Devil Worship in France," by the same author, and another on Vampirism.

I would like to relate an unusual experience: A friend and myself were experimenting with thought transference, with which we had been having some startling results. At the time we were sitting across a table from each other with our eyes closed to aid in excluding outside thoughts. This went on for some time until I felt as though I were floating in space. When this realization came I was naturally surprised and in that instant I seemed to awake with a start as I felt the shock of falling what felt like a distance of about three feet into my chair with a distinct jolt. As our experiment had started with nothing like this in mind, I cannot understand its meaning or just what had occurred to me. My friend said he felt a shock of "awakening" but had not experienced the sense of "suspension in space" that I had. I would like to hear from someone who might be able to explain this to me.

Getting back to the magazine, let me say that I have been enjoying it very much. I do not care for the "Super Science-fiction" type of story and feel that they have no place in a magazine devoted to strange stories. Please keep them unusual. Give us tales of the occult, weird stories that stir the imagination. Tales of hidden cults of diabolic rites, necromancy and Black Arts. The secret practices of ancient priests of Tibet, Vampirism and Voodoo . . . here are subjects for the mind to explore.

Edmond Good.

Hamilton, Ontario,  
Canada.

And now for some comments on the last issue:

I've just finished reading the April issue of **STRANGE STORIES**, and I have no kick to register. I've read every issue and enjoyed them all. Ever since I can remember, sea yarns of weird mystery have been my favorite, and the **THIRTEENTH BOAT** was in my opinion No. 1 in the April issue. I haven't had the thrill of such a good sea tale for a long time. **ONE MAN'S HELL** would have been No. 1 if you hadn't published the sea story. **THE SLANTING SHADOW** was rather unique and rates an easy third place. Then **PATH TO PERDITION** and **HIS NAME ON A**

**LET THE STARS BE  
YOUR GUIDE!**

Consult Your Daily Horoscope in

**EVERYDAY  
ASTROLOGY**

Every Month **10c** At All Stands



BULLET were so darn good it's a shame to have to put 'em in fourth place.

As I said in my last letter, you still hold first place in my estimation.

Chester Payfer.

Yale, Michigan.

Your issue of April, 1940, is uniformly fine. Every phase of the Black Arts is represented. A commendable feature of STRANGE STORIES is the lack of serials. A magazine presenting quality does not need a good story serialized.

To my mind, Wellman's HIS NAME ON A BULLET is the best in the issue. Second place goes to Eshbach for his THE CAULDRON. And third place to Clemons for his PATH TO PERDITION.

Bart Reagan.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

I have read your stories in the April issue and find them very good. The one story I thought was the best was PATH TO PERDITION, by John Clemons. The second one was THE SPIDER WOMAN, by Maria Moravsky.

While I was down in South America last year I picked up a book called "Black Magic." It has always amazed me what some people believe to be actual facts. In this book were a few stories about werewolves and zombies. I cannot understand why a lot of people, including some noted ones, believe in these things.

Howard Rasmussen.

Chicago, Ill.

And now here is an experience that one of our readers had which wins a Master's card:

For more than fourteen years I have been employed in the same office, and, in the course of time I have come to know most of the tenants in the neighboring offices intimately. One of my favorites was a Dr. G—, whose offices were next door and with whom we shared a radio. That is, the radio was his, but he had placed a loudspeaker in my office which could be turned on or shut off at will. It was his custom to rap a series of signals on the wall when there was a program in which he knew I would be interested. Then he would open his window and proceed to accompany the orchestration with his piercingly sweet whistle.

One Saturday evening I had stayed late to finish some work in my laboratory, and, not liking the silence of a large empty building, I took my key and entered Dr. G.'s dark office and turned on the radio. After a while, back in my office, there came over the ether a song that was accompanied by Dr. G.'s trilling whistle. There was a staccato rap on the wall to call my attention to the music. I finished my work with a sense of well-being produced by the knowledge that I was not alone; my friend had returned and was right next door.

As I left the office, his door opened and he emerged carrying a handful of withered flowers. He looked so pale and wan that I stopped and asked if he were ill and was there something I could do? He shook his head and made his way on down the hall.

Monday morning, early, an elevator operator asked me, as I came in, if I had heard about Dr. G. He told me that Dr. G. had died Saturday afternoon at his summer home in a resort across the lake. As I passed his door I heard the radio still on as I had left it Saturday night. That was six years ago and there are new neighbors in his office now but I still won't stay alone in the dark building on Saturday nights.

M. Hyde.

Chicago, Illinois.

Another interesting experience is included in the following letter:

I would like to add my name to your rolls of the new club that you are forming, the Black Arts Club. I have read your interesting magazine ever since it has been on the market. Another favorite magazine of mine is THRILLING WONDER

(Continued on page 128)

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That's all! Only about 8¢ a day is average cost of Allstate Automobile Insurance Policy in most states. Allstate was organized years ago by Sears, Roebuck and Co. to meet the needs of the American car owner. Your Allstate Policy may save you a substantial sum, because in most states, Allstate's rates are considerably lower than listed manual rates. In a few states Allstate issues a participating policy at manual rates on which it has paid substantial dividends to policyholders. You may take six months to pay your premiums. And you enjoy the protection with a sound, reliable company, known for its fair policy of settling all claims promptly, and for promptly paying legally assessed damages for bodily injury, loss of life and property, in accordance with the terms of your policy. Other features: protection when you drive cars belonging to others; up to \$5.00 a day reimbursed you for other transportation, up to 30 days, if your car is stolen; Passenger Medical Insurance at slight extra cost (in states where permitted); full insurance against fire, theft, collision. Write today for rates on your automobile. Simply copy down from your State License Card all the information about your car such as make, year, model, motor number, serial number, etc. Send this information today to Allstate Insurance Company, 20 N. Wacker Drive, Desk C-26, Chicago, Illinois.

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WEAR THEM  
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No Doctor's Examination! No Agent will call!

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A new LOW-Cost Special 20-Payment Life Insurance Policy for Men, Women and Children. Age 1 day to 55 Years. Double Indemnity! Liberal Cash and Loan values! SEND NO MONEY! If you are in good health and under 55 years of age write TODAY to American Life and Acc. Ins. Co., 269A, American Life Bldg., St. Louis, Mo., sending your full name, date of birth, race, height, weight, duties of occupation, name and relationship of your beneficiary, and condition of your health. Your policy will be mailed at once for FREE inspection! No red tape! No obligation! No agent will call! Save by mail—Write NOW!

## FREE SAMPLES OF REMARK- ABLE TREATMENT FOR Stomach Ulcers Due to Gastric Hyperacidity



H. H. Bromley, of Shelburne, Vt., writes: "I suffered for years with acid-stomach trouble. My doctors told me I had ulcers and would have to diet the rest of my life. Before taking your treatment I lost a lot of weight and could eat nothing but soft foods and milk. After taking Von's Tablets, I felt perfectly well, ate almost anything and gained back the weight I had lost." If you suffer from indigestion, gastritis, heartburn, bloating or any other stomach trouble due to gastric hyperacidity, you, too, should try Von's for prompt relief. Send for FREE Samples of this treatment and details of guaranteed trial offer. Instructive Booklet is included. Write

PHILADELPHIA VON CO. Dept. 62-H  
Fox Building, Philadelphia, Pa.

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Free Examination. Send Your Poems to

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today for our 10-DAY TRIAL OFFER. DYNAMIC WELDER  
COMPANY, 2226-MM, SILVERTON ROAD, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.



(Continued from page 127)

STORIES. Let me say that I am a member of the Science-fiction League although I have not taken any active part as yet.

Before getting down to the business in hand, let me first commend the new magazine CAPTAIN FUTURE. I hope I can follow his exploits for many years to come, if they continue as exemplified by the first issue. I like long stories—about characters that live and do things not impossible even for advanced science.

I am sending in the coupon for membership in the Black Arts Club and a short account of a personal experience with the occult:

My father bought a home upon a certain street in Indianapolis that had been vacated for several years but was in good repairs. As I was young then, I had the attic room for my own, which was far removed from the bedroom of my parents. We had only lived there a short time when one night around one o'clock in the wee hours of the night I awoke screaming with fright from the sounds I heard issuing from the portion of the attic closed off. My father, believing that I had a nightmare, took me downstairs to bed with him.

When on two succeeding nights I again heard a horrid groaning and moaning accompanied by ghastly rattling of chains, and my yelling aroused my parents, my father decided to investigate the attic. He found a large hole that lay between the walls and extended to the foundations. Lowering a flashlight, he looked carefully, thinking perhaps a bird or rat was there. Nothing was to be seen. And as the sounds did not occur again, soon nothing more was said about it.

However, years later I learned that my father became interested and inquired from his agents. It seems that a year or so previous to my experience a woman had been murdered and the body thrown from the attic into this hole and had lain there for some time undiscovered.

Samuel V. Cox.

Indianapolis, Indiana.

Well, that's all for now. If you haven't as yet joined the Black Arts Club, do so now. Simply fill out the coupon below and become a VOTARY of the Black Arts—or if you can write about an interesting experience or some intriguing aspect of the occult and supernatural, you may become a MASTER of the Black Arts. Remember, keep those letters streaming in! See you in the next issue.

—THE EDITOR.

## THE BLACK ARTS CLUB

Strange Stories Magazine,

22 West 48th Street, New York, N. Y.

I am hereby applying for membership in THE BLACK ARTS CLUB. I am a regular reader of STRANGE STORIES, interested in the occult, and am enrolling as a

VOTARY ☐

MASTER ☐

(Check one. If the latter, enclose a letter of 200 words or less on some phase of the Black Arts.)

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If you desire a membership card, please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

6-40

Use U. S. stamps only.



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(Continued from previous issue.)

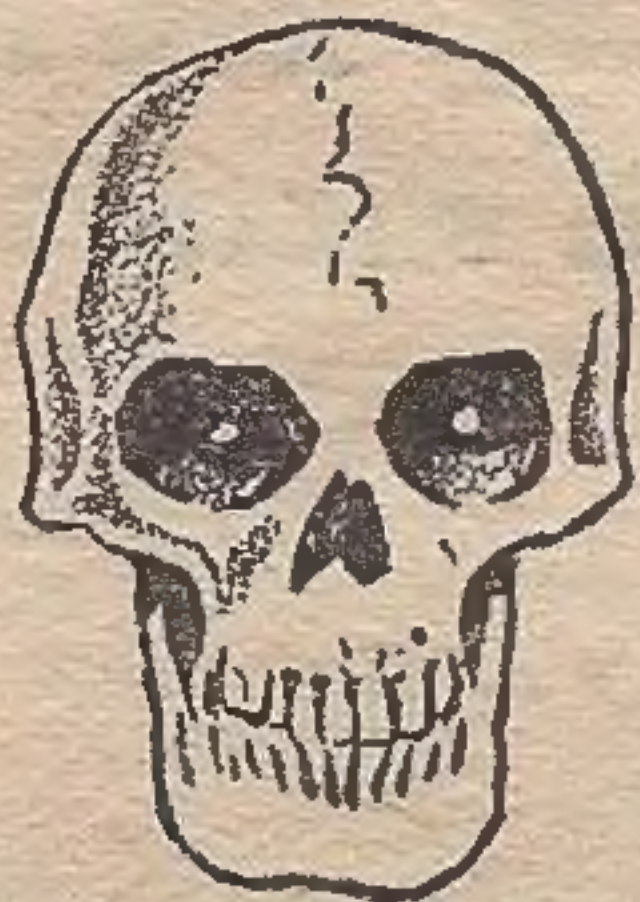
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| 29x4.60-20 |     | 2.35   | 1.05   |
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| 28x4.75-19 |     | 2.45   | 1.25   |
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| 28x5.25-18 |     | 2.90   | 1.35   |
| 29x5.25-19 |     | 2.95   | 1.35   |
| 30x5.25-20 |     | 2.95   | 1.35   |
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| 28x5.50-18 |     | 3.25   | 1.40   |
| 29x5.50-19 |     | 3.35   | 1.40   |
| 30x5.50-20 |     | 3.40   | 1.40   |
| 31x5.50-21 |     | 3.45   | 1.45   |
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| 32x4     | 2.95   | 1.25   | 30x5     | 3.65   | 1.65   |
| 33x4     | 2.95   | 1.25   | 33x5     | 3.75   | 1.75   |
| 34x4     | 3.25   | 1.35   | 33x5     | 3.95   | 1.75   |
| 32x4 1/2 | 3.35   | 1.45   |          |        |        |

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| 30x5 | \$4.25 | \$1.95 | 34x7 | \$10.95 | \$4.05 |
| 33x5 | 3.95   | 1.75   | 38x7 | 10.95   | 4.65   |
| 34x5 | 4.25   | 2.25   | 36x8 | 11.45   | 4.95   |
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#### TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

| Size    | Tires  | Tubes  | Size    | Tires  | Tubes  |
|---------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| 30x6-20 | \$3.75 | \$1.65 | 7.50-20 | \$6.95 | \$3.75 |
| 30x6-20 | 4.45   | 1.95   | 8.25-20 | 8.95   | 4.95   |
| 7.00-20 | 5.95   | 2.95   | 9.00-20 | 10.95  | 5.65   |
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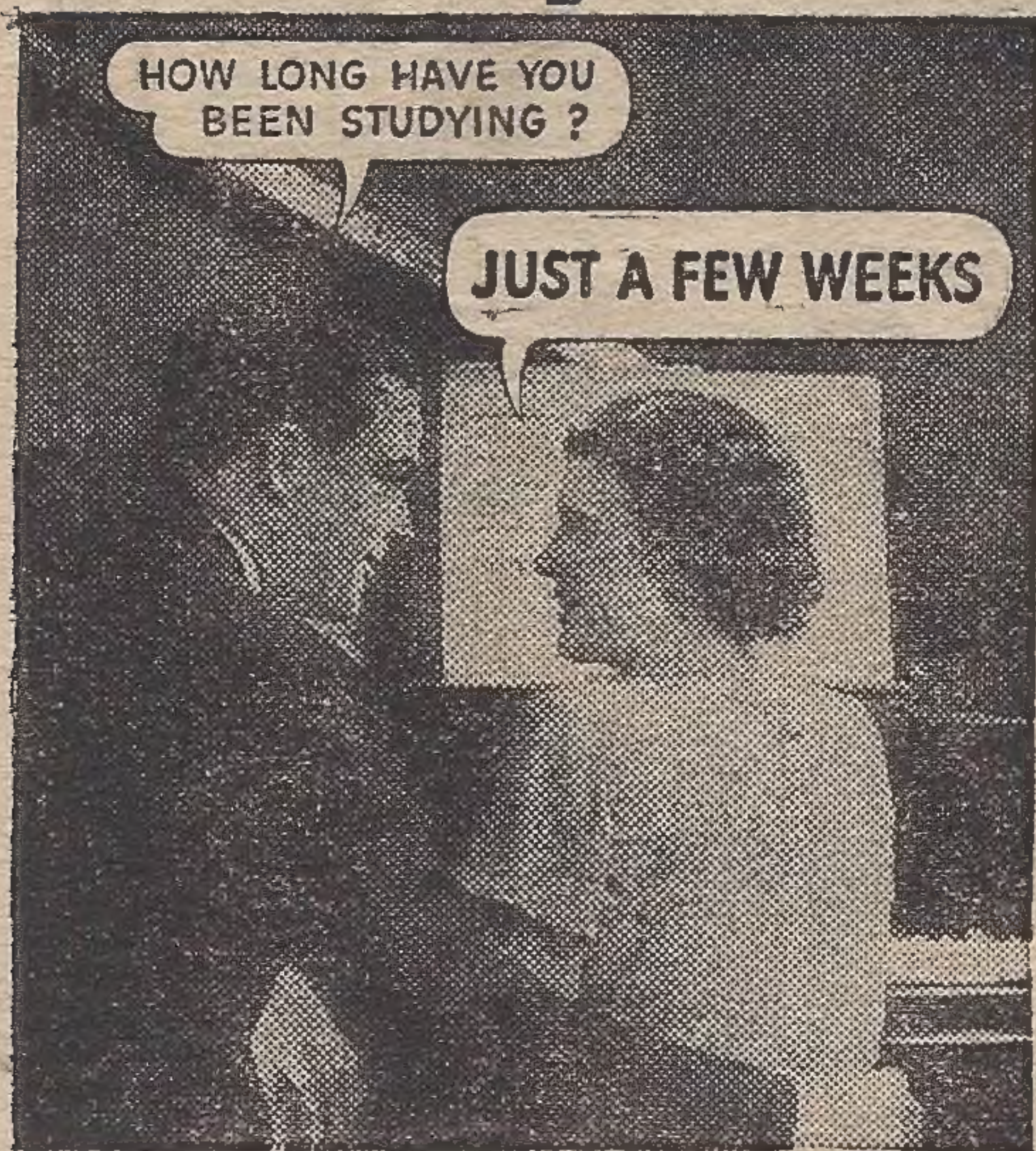
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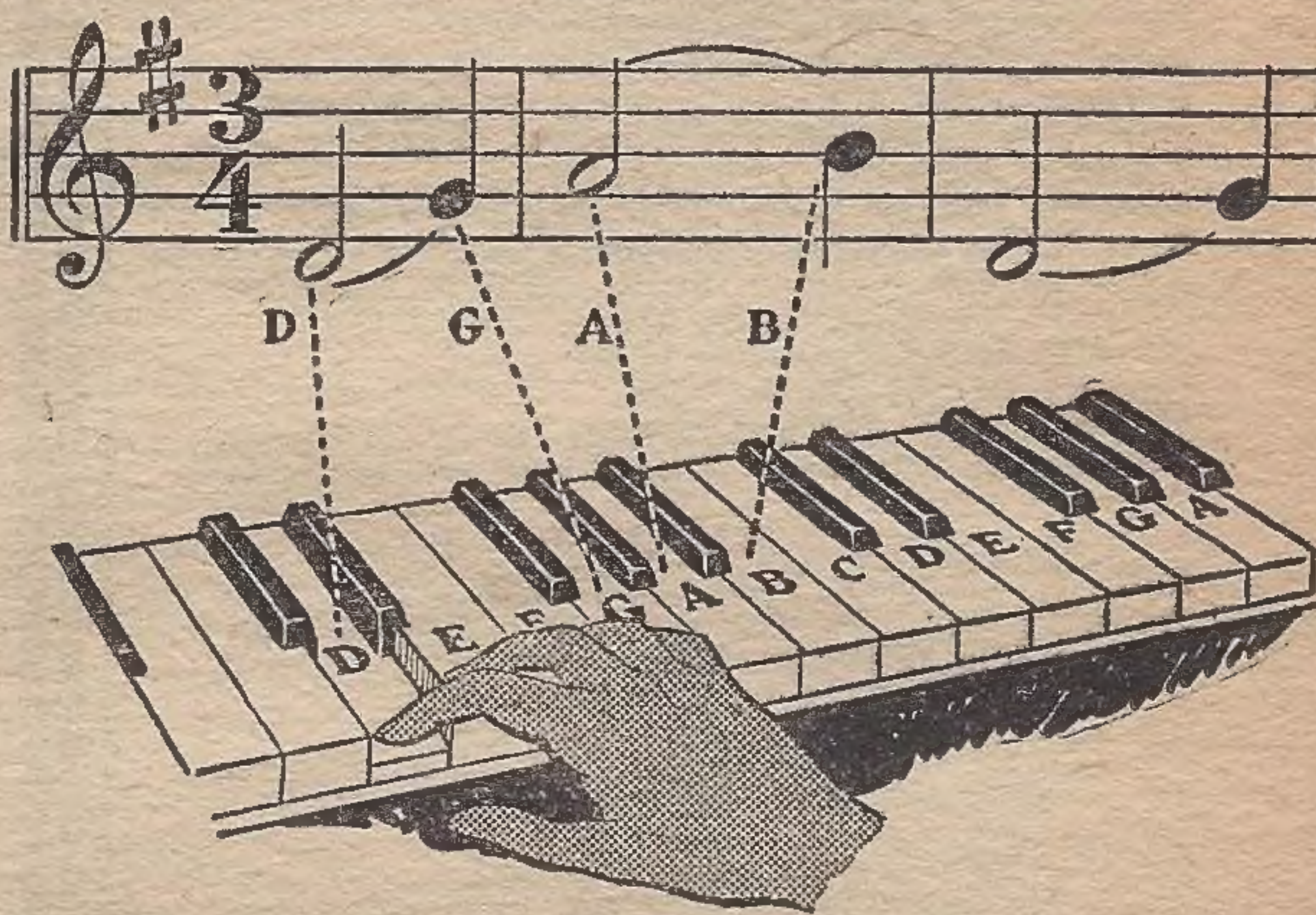
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# Charlie Barnet Uses Home Recordo!



Charlie Barnet in his private hotel suite checking a duet by Judy Ellington and Larry Taylor, Vocalists in his band.

You, Too,  
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Judy Ellington heard in Charlie Barnet's Band making a Home Recordo record for her personal album.

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Larry Taylor, Vocalist in Charlie Barnet's Band, listening to a play back of a recording he just made with Home Recordo.

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Charlie Barnet with his arranger, Bill May, often check new arrangements on Home Recordo.

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